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MINIST ISSUE

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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

PREMATURE OBITUARIES

Feminism has been getting a lot of bad press lately. College-age women, *The New York Times* reports, don't want it. Their older sisters, *Newsweek* insinuates, don't need it: Do not a third of husbands in two-career marriages cook at least one meal a week? Nor do the brickbats come solely from the mainstream media. "Cultural conservatism" is the new fad on the left, with erstwhile firebrands from Ivan Illich on down glorifying the traditional (i.e., male-dominated) family and patronizing the would-be (or must-be) autonomous woman as the dupe of consumer capitalism.

Post-feminism. The Second Stage. The Return to the Family. All these attempts to present feminism as passé remind us of Molière's Imaginary Doctor, who, when informed that he had confused the locations of the liver and the heart, blithely replied, "Yes, it used to be so, but we have changed all that." In fact, women are still discriminated against in every area of life, from the workplace to the courts to the hearth and home so dear to cultural conservatives.

If injustice were all it took to make a movement, Ronald Reagan and the Pope would be the best friends women ever had. But what propels feminism is not just the persistence of sexism. It is the imaginative energy of the feminist vision itself—of a world in which both sexes share alike in work and domestic life, and come together in relations not predicated on power.

Today, an exciting new feminist scholarship is re-evaluating a host of subjects from sexuality to the history of socialism to coeducation. This spring books issue offers a sampling of recent offerings in—and from—the field. Lively, contradictory, urgent, they make the best reply to the complacent, right and left: If you think you've found the answer, you weren't listening to the question.

BOYS ON THE RUN
Todd Gitlin

UTOPIAN FEMINISM
Ellen DuBois

THE POLITICS OF S/M
Ann Jones

MOVIE DADS
Molly Haskell

'OUR NIG'
Margo Jefferson

SOVIET SEXISM
Karen Rosenberg

DANCING ON THE MISSILE SILOS

LETTER FROM LONDON

BARBARA KOENIG QUART

London

For feminists, London is a heady place to be. The disarmament movement is rapidly growing, with women involved on every level and the Greenham Common women its heroic symbol and forward wedge. As if to underline the linkage of feminism and antinuclear activity, Virago Press, which for years has been reissuing out-of-print novels by women between the most beautiful covers around, has just brought out—between plain black covers—*Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb*, a collection of essays edited by Dorothy Thompson.

Above all, British feminism is bound up with the left—not surprising in a society where every issue is tied to class. According to novelist Sara Maitland, who recently published a book about women and Christianity, *A Map of the New Country*, feminists here would never feel that "one female manager of a bank is a victory so long as the cleaning women are still on low pay." Thus, middle-class feminists are supporting working-class women in the struggle to get women's issues on the agendas of the traditionally male-dominated trade unions. As you might expect in a country where a woman Prime Minister has devastated government programs benefiting women, there's great suspicion of token success. Maitland points out that *Spare Rib*, the closest thing here to *Ms.*, does not carry photographs of famous or outstanding women on its cover, as *Ms.* so often does. Indeed, the cover of the May *Spare Rib* has a line of Palestinian women and children across the top. Last month's issue had a cover drawing of a kitchen at a battered women's shelter, in which black, white and Indian women and children are cheerfully preparing a meal.

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LETTERS.

WEINRAUB'S JOURNALISM

New York City

Seymour Krim is entitled to whatever views he holds about Bernard Weinraub's novel *Bylines* [". . . And Twice Upon A 'Times,'" *The Nation*, May 7]. I have my own, and they are probably equally contentious. But he is *not* entitled to freebooting, abstract views of Weinraub's reporting in *The New York Times*, which is a matter of record. Had he followed that reporting, he would know that far from being a "classic drudge, [with] no style, no personality, no sass," Weinraub has produced, from Saigon, New Delhi, Washington and wherever he has worked, some of the most vivid and perceptive journalism in the world.

Krim would do well to stick to assessing novels, not guessing about journalism he has not read. *Richard M. Clurman*

THE POLITICS OF REVIEWING

New Haven, Conn.

I was extremely disappointed and not a little angry to see the shabby treatment afforded by *The Nation* to *The Politics of Law*, edited by David Kairys [Randall Kennedy, "Much Bark, Little Bite," May 7]. Most of the review consists of Kennedy's failed attempt to construct a substantive critical essay out of a series of facile and superficial observations, e.g., the twenty essays in the book differ in tone and intention; "assertions are made without citations to support them"; and finally (here's a big one now), the book "does not even have an index or a bibliography." At the minimum, a responsible book reviewer has an obligation, to author and potential readers alike, to present and respond to a book's principal themes and arguments and to offer constructive criticism where appropriate. Kennedy's review, however, does none of these things. Readers of *The Nation*, and certainly the book's authors, deserve better treatment.

I cannot close without commenting on the arrogant and condescending tone of Kennedy's review. There is no excuse for the use of such phrases as "comradely faith" to dismiss offhandedly the deeply felt and hard-earned political convictions that are shared by the authors of the essays in *The Politics of Law*. And surely the lawyers and law teachers who contributed to the book do not deserve Kennedy's patronizing reduction of their work to "an admirable display of political fortitude." Someone who expresses his own "political fortitude" by serving as a clerk to a Federal judge could stand to be a bit more circumspect in his judgments of others.

Finally, I would like to remind *Nation* readers that Thomas Emerson, whose work Kennedy correctly invokes as an inspiring example of dissenting legal scholarship, has written of *The Politics of Law* that it "takes a searching look at American law and legal institutions, and discusses in a perceptive and stimulating way where we are and where we ought to be if we are ever to achieve a more humane society." *J. Gregory Conti*

KENNEDY REPLIES

Washington

I meant no disrespect to the contributors to *The Politics of Law*. I trust that they, and the readers of *The Nation*, recognize the usefulness of frank criticism.

Conti's ad hominem attack on me merits no response. But perhaps it is worth noting that the passage he quotes from Professor Emerson appears as a blurb on the cover of *The Politics of Law*. *Randall Kennedy*

THE ORIGIN OF 'PACIFISM'

Staten Island, N.Y.

To those of us who have spent considerable time in the study of pacifism, it is doubly depressing to read in Gary Giddins's review of *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* ["O.K., Parp, Pabst and Putz," *The Nation*, May 14] that, according to the O.E.D., "'pacifism' (the word not the concept) was the most lasting result of the 10th Universal Peace Congress, in 1902, though all the examples of its usage are pugnacious."

The 10th U.P.C. was held in 1901, not 1902, and "pacifism" was not its most lasting contribution. The word was coined elsewhere, by Emile Arnaud, president of the International League of Peace and Liberty, in an article in *L'Indépendance Belge*. Arnaud wrote in August 1901:

> Our great party needs a name; it has no name and this lack considerably hinders our progress. No words in the dictionary are adequate for our program. We are not passive types, we are not only pacifiers, . . . we are all these things as well as something more; in a word, we are pacifists . . . and our ism is pacifism.

The "we" referred to thousands of Europeans and Americans organized in local and national peace societies affiliated with the International Peace Bureau in Bern. Numbers are hard to determine, but in France alone there may have been more than 25,000 active members in more than seventy-nine peace societies. . . .

Sandi E. Cooper

SPRINGTIME FOR RICHARD III

Portland, Me.

I was rather horrified to find the editorial "Springtime for Hitler" [*The Nation*, May 7] facilely compare Hitler to Richard III. I realize that Richard is still considered a monster in the popular mind; however, I would expect responsible writers, especially those working for a journal whose reputation rests on making "subtle distinctions" between what is popularly believed and what is in fact the case, to have some scruples about making such a blatantly erroneous comparison. Even if Richard had committed all the crimes ascribed to him by his political enemies, his deeds would not compare to Hitler's. Did the writer of this editorial pull Richard's name out of a black hat, never bothering to peruse even an encyclopedia, any one of which would have set him straight on the facts of Richard's life and reign? As the *Americana* puts it, "During his brief reign Richard showed promise of becoming an outstanding monarch, but the Tudor myth blackened his character and reputation and Shakespeare permanently enshrined the legend in the popular mind." . . .

Agnes Bushell

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so please bear with us.

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EDITORIALS.

Gandhi in Gaza

There was a big to-do in the American press last week over a statement made by the Palestine Liberation Organization's chairman, Yasir Arafat. "An effective war is the only way to redraw the political map of the Middle East," Arafat told members of Al Fatah, his personal faction within the P.L.O. He urged his auditors to go forth and do battle against the "Zionist-American enemy."

Unlike Anwar el-Sadat, who always addressed his remarks to the U.S. media, Arafat speaks primarily to his own people. That should be borne in mind in interpreting what he said; and so should the timing of his remarks. They came shortly after press reports of a near mutiny by restive P.L.O. troops stationed in Lebanon. Since those troops are positioned in the Bekaa Valley, behind Syrian lines, it is not unlikely that the rebellion was instigated by the Syrians themselves in a move calculated to remind Arafat that Damascus is his protector these days. If so, the tactic succeeded; the rebellion forced Arafat to reassert his militancy and trot out the tired promises of martial victory.

Of course Arafat also fanned the enduring embers of just grievances. The Palestinians' rights to democratic self-determination and a homeland are as compelling as ever. But

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the option of pursuing political ends by military means was crushed under the tracks of Israeli tanks almost a year ago. The scattered remnants of the P.L.O.'s militia no longer pose a threat to any nation. The organization has been stripped of its ability to wage an armed struggle for a Palestinian state (if indeed it ever had that power); Arafat's war talk was sheer bluster.

It is an old and familiar story—the powerless being robbed of their birthright by the powerful. And the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with the tacit acquiescence of the United States, was only the most recent episode in the long-running Palestinian serial. Yet one of the most tragic aspects of this saga has been the chronic failure of P.L.O. leaders to devise an effective strategy for advancing their cause.

The Palestinians do have one potent option left: waging nonviolent political warfare in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel is still a democracy, and it is possible that, like Britain did in India, it would eventually make concessions under nonviolent duress that it would never agree to under the threat of violence. The problem, of course, is that a campaign of small and large acts of civil disobedience—a strike by Palestinian workers constructing Israeli settlements, for example—would call for charismatic Gandhian leadership and a degree of political maturity not heretofore shown by Arafat and the rest of the P.L.O. hierarchy.

Despite the public relations victory the P.L.O. scored as a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, its stock is at a low point. Unless its leaders can challenge Israel effectively in a new struggle for what remains of Palestine, they will be doomed to irrelevance as a quarrelsome conclave of aging bureaucratic revolutionaries. Worst of all, they will have failed their own people.

What Women Want

Last hired, first fired, ghettoized in low-paying jobs and trying to raise children with meager support from social services, women have been the hardest hit in this economic slump. Spurred by Reagan's budget cuts, the feminization of poverty in America is proceeding rapidly. Single women head more than half of the country's poor families, and two out of every three adults below the poverty line are women. Those women lucky enough to have full-time jobs make, on the average, 59 cents for every $1 earned by a man; the unemployment rate for women in December 1982 was 10.3 percent, the highest since the end of World War II. For black women, the rate was 18.6 percent.

Although the majority of the electorate is female, Washington remains deaf to women's voices. The Women's Presidential Project, an ad hoc committee of 176 women that includes congresswomen, representatives of women's organizations and Democratic Party activists, has sent a statement and a questionnaire to the Democratic candidates. (For further information on the project write to Bella Abzug, Women U.S.A., 11 Hanover Square, New York, N.Y. 10005.) The statement emphasizes women's growing and potentially decisive political strength; the answers to the questions will be made public with a view to mobilizing women in support of the candidate who best represents their interests. Here are some of the questions the women asked:

Employment

What economic recovery and jobs programs have you developed that will specifically address the employment needs of women? What are your long-term proposals for relieving unemployment? Do you favor collective bargaining rights for all workers, including public employees? What measures do you support to insure safe working conditions? What measures will you initiate to end economic discrimination against women?

Peace and Disarmament

What are you doing about the adoption of a nuclear freeze; the development of a rational, nonaggressive defense strategy and budget; the passage of international agreements leading toward mutual disarmament? What fundamental changes in military and foreign policy will you propose to enhance the prospects of world peace?

Children and Families

What are you doing to restore funding for maternity and child welfare programs; to address the needs of pregnant women and working mothers; to increase the number of high-quality child-care facilities; to provide enhanced and equal educational opportunities for girls and boys?

Reproductive Rights

Do you support a woman's right to decide whether or not to bear a child? Do you oppose the denial of Medicaid funding and other Federal aid to women who choose to terminate pregnancies? Do you oppose attempts to reduce the effectiveness of family planning programs?

Equal Rights Amendment

What steps are you taking to insure the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment?

Civil Rights

What steps have you taken to implement the Democratic Party's civil rights platform, which states, "All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, language, age, sex or sexual orientation"?

Social Security

What steps would you take to give homemakers separate coverage under the Social Security system? Would you push for continued cost-of-living adjustments in Social Security benefits to help older women keep pace with inflation? How would you insure the solvency of the Social Security system in the long run?

Women in Politics

What steps are you taking to encourage and assist the

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election and appointment, at every level, of women who support the major goals of American women?

Environmental Protection

What are you doing to prevent the construction of new nuclear power plants? How would you encourage the development of clean, renewable alternative energy sources and the strict enforcement of clean water and air standards?

Jim Dombrowski

James A. Dombrowski, who died recently in New Orleans at the age of 86, was a gentleman and an agitator. His long life dedicated to the cause of racial and economic justice in his native South bore eloquent witness to the accuracy of Gunnar Myrdal's observation, in *An American Dilemma*, that "Southern liberalism is not liberalism as it is found elsewhere in America or in the world."

Of course, Jim, with his wry and soft-spoken humor, might have denied that he was a liberal at all, pointing to his book, *Early Days of Christian Socialism in America*, based on his doctoral dissertation at Union Theological Seminary. Although Southern political religion is all too often embodied by conservatives like Jerry Falwell and his ilk, Jim would have been the first to remind us that the idealism and the enthusiasm of the social gospel frequently found expression in Southern accents.

In 1932, with his fellow Union seminarian Myles Horton, Jim founded the Highlander Folk School in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. Highlander was practicing "participatory democracy" when the old left was still debating the immanence of the Third Period, and has continued to practice it as the New Left becomes an increasingly distant memory. Long before Freedom Riders or summer volunteers came south, Highlander was a staging area for attacks on segregation. (The photograph of Martin Luther King Jr. at a "Communist training school" that appeared on those John Birch Society billboards that used to decorate Southern highways was shot at Highlander.)

Jim left Highlander in 1942 to become director of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, the foremost organization of Southern New Dealers and progressives. Historians have yet to devise a way to measure the importance of small and sometimes lonely communities of dissenters like Highlander and the Southern Conference, but at the very least they keep alternative visions and values in full view of a society—national, not just regional—that usually wants to look the other way. And they have the great satisfaction of infuriating their enemies by their dogged persistence.

Sometimes a man can be judged by the quality of the enemies he makes, and Jim made some of the best. Senator Theodore Bilbo, for example, once described the S.C.H.W. as an "Unamerican, negro social equality, communist mongrel outfit," a perception shared by others, nominally more respectable, who often saw Red where blacks and whites mingled. The Southern Conference was done in by the schism that wracked American liberalism during the cold war, but its educational arm, the Southern Conference Educational Fund, with Jim Dombrowski as director and New Dealer Aubrey Williams as president, lived on to witness the vindication of its prematurely integrationist views.

In the early 1960s, the S.C.E.F. office and Jim's home were ransacked at gunpoint by New Orleans police officers and agents of the state's Committee on Un-American Activities; he was arrested, and all the S.C.E.F. documents were hauled away. According to the chairman of the committee, the arrest was for "racial agitation." ("Among the dangerous articles removed was Thoreau's Journal," U.S. District Court Judge John Minor Wisdom observed.) When this case, *Dombrowski v. Pfister*, reached the Supreme Court, Justice William Brennan, in his majority opinion, extended the reach of the First Amendment. Although Jim had not yet been tried (normally a prerequisite for Federal review), Brennan held that the "chilling effect" on free speech required the nullification of the arrest without a trial. Otherwise, he wrote, proper safeguards "would have to be hammered out case by case—and tested only by those hearty enough to risk criminal prosecution." Jim Dombrowski was one of those hearty enough. When the stolen S.C.E.F. papers were handed over to Senator James Eastland, he proved hearty enough once again; *Dombrowski v. Eastland* forced their return.

That was not Jim's first encounter with Eastland. In 1954, along with Myles Horton and Virginia Durr, he was subpoenaed to appear before the Senator's Subcommittee on Internal Security, at that point still the Jenner committee. After two grueling days of Red-baiting, during which he answered questions about himself but refused to name names, Jim finally lost his patience. "Mr. Chairman," he said on the second day,

> this may sound strange to your ears, but there are people in this country who are not frightened by a label. I happen to be a student of religious history and I know that everybody who has ever attempted to do anything for his fellow man has been abused and criticized. . . . For the first time, I now raise my voice a little, but I believe this so deeply: That America is losing what made it strong—people who have not been afraid to express an opinion that is unpopular.

Jim Dombrowski was not afraid. He was part of a remarkable band of Southern dissenters who raised their voices more than a little for racial and economic justice, and his voice will be missed.

JOHN S. ROSENBERG

John S. Rosenberg, formerly of The Nation, *is practicing history with a law firm in Washington.*

COMING UP

Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon and Thomas E. Weisskopf on "industrial policy" and its dangers to economic and political democracy.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

You would not know it from the conduct of some officials, but in 1977 the Public Documents Commission addressed the vexing question of who has the right to possess and dispose of state papers. It reached the unambiguous conclusion that "all records and documents accumulated by all federal officials in the discharge of their duty shall be recognized . . . [as] the property of the United States." Note, that's *all* records and documents and *all* Federal officials.

Various ingenious and unscrupulous means have been employed to circumvent this honest and open recommendation. Over the last few years, we have seen a whole clutch of ex-politicians and ex-public servants devise the documentary equivalent of a tax shelter, thereby depriving scholars and journalists of access to the political and factual records. The easiest tax shelter takes the form of a deed of gift, by which the former toiler in the public weal makes a "present" of his papers to the government, reserving exclusive access to himself, often for life. This is what Ford did, what Kissinger did and what Carter tried to do. It has the added advantage of being lucrative by pushing up the price of "exclusive" memoirs. The latest and most blatant offender is Alexander Haig.

On March 9 of this year, Anna Nelson wrote a letter to Robert Warner. Nothing, you may say, remarkable in that. But Nelson is the chairman (her term, not mine) of the Joint Committee on Historians and Archivists of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians and the Society of American Archivists. And Warner is the Archivist of the United States. The subject of the letter was the donation, by the former Secretary of State, of eighteen filing cabinets of his papers to the Library of Congress. Wrote Nelson:

> Since Watergate and the Public Documents Commission, the historical community has been very concerned with the propensity of public officials to mix personal papers with official records. . . . the enormous size of the Haig collection once again raises the specter of official records resting in a private collection under the control of the donor.

Nelson followed this observation with some trenchant questions. She wondered, for instance, whether

> the National Archives was informed that Haig intended to send such a voluminous collection to the Library of Congress. Was the Archivist of the United States or any member of the National Archives notified by the State Department that the filing cabinets were being removed? Was an archivist allowed to review the contents of the filing cabinets?

Warner replied rather meekly, stating that:

> All of us at NARS [National Archives and Records Service] share the Joint Committee's concerns about the mixing of personal papers and official records.

He went on, more revealingly, to say that he had written to William Price, the ponderously named Director of the Foreign Affairs Information Management Center at the Department of State. NARS asked if it could review the Haig gift "before its transfer to the Library of Congress," where a Top Secret clearance, along with other complex permissions, will be required for access to it. But:

> After several days, Mr. Price informed us that in the opinion of the State Department's legal counsel, NARS had no right to inspect the material. Our request was, consequently, denied.

This bit of bureaucratic definition recalls to mind the case of the Kissinger papers. Then, too, it was decided (on that occasion by the Department of Justice) that "NARS did not have the authority to determine which documentary materials in the Department of State constituted the official records." Warner recounted this precedent rather ruefully, concluding:

> Obviously, we were not pleased by this finding and draft legislation to clarify NARS' authority was prepared. When the draft legislation was submitted to the various agencies for comment, the results were mixed, and indicated a great deal of confusion.

NARS rests its case on a ruling by Judge Harold Greene, who stated in his opinion in a suit involving F.B.I. papers that "it is clear that the independent professionals of NARS are the final arbiters of what is 'appropriate for preservation' from the government's point of view." This perspective is, alas, not very widely shared by the members of Congress, who have the power to decide how state papers should be disposed of. Nor has the Supreme Court ever shown much interest in the scandal of the mixture of public and private archives. Perhaps this is because members of Congress and of the Court have the right to define their own papers as private.

General Haig is now in the happy position of having his papers indexed and warehoused, at the public's expense and on his own terms. The documents are not to become available to the vulgar gaze for twenty-five years or until five years after his death, whichever is the later. This is almost the same period of restriction employed by the State Department for official material. And the department officials who were involved in the decision, and in the discreet transfer of the filing cabinets, were mostly Haig appointees. So a number of Haig's more intriguing activities—in the Nixon pardon, for instance, or in maneuvers over the Falklands and Lebanon—are now classified as his business and none of ours.

As the case of the Environmental Protection Agency's luncheon diary has most recently reminded us, ostensibly private documents can have immediate bearing on matters of public interest. Yet if you throw in a few of your speeches (in themselves designed to alter opinion in the public domain) and other memorabilia, you can baptize public property, even historical property, as a private resource. The old aphorism of private affluence and public squalor has long needed a refurbishment. What we have here, as in so many areas of Reagan's Washington, is private squalor at public expense.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Letter From London

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

For all the despair about Margaret Thatcher's England, women's groups in London have new access to power and funding as a result of local elections two years ago, which brought a left-Labor majority to the Greater London Council. The G.L.C., which designated London a nuclear-free zone, a fact boldly announced on every municipal truck, has set up Women's Committees with salaried officers; and groups too controversial to get help from previous governments now receive G.L.C. funding—from Lesbian Line to day-care centers for the Greenham Common women to Safe Women's Transport. This last organization will soon start a nighttime minibus service for women; the bus will have two women drivers, one of whom will even see passengers up the lifts of their council tower blocks (public housing projects) and to their very doors. It's one attempt to deal with the rising rate of violence against women. Another is the ongoing campaign against pornography, which this month included pickets of W.H. Smith, the chain newsdealers, for carrying porn magazines, and demonstrations against sex shops in Soho.

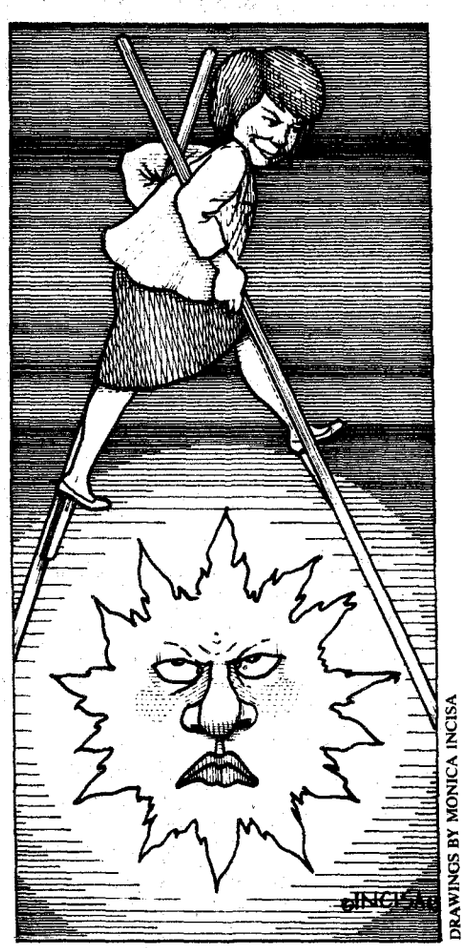
The mutilation of women by clitoral circumcision—more accurately, excision—an operation performed on millions of girls, mostly in Africa and Asia, was the subject of a recent BBC documentary by Louise Panton, who went to the Sudan with an all-woman crew. The documentary brings home the full horror of the practice, even though the film itself was given a radical excision—all the footage of the operation was cut because the BBC balked at the showing of female genitalia. A bill prohibiting clitoral circumcision in England is currently before Parliament, primarily because of the BBC broadcast.

Violence *by* women, for a change, rather than *to* them, is the subject of Maureen Gorris's *A Question of Silence*, a much discussed Dutch film which has been playing here for several months. The film, about three women who more or less gratuitously kill a male store owner after he catches one of them shoplifting, has elicited hostile and perfunctory reviews from male critics; heavy anxiety from every man I've spoken to who's seen it; and a great deal of interest among women, many of whom see it as less about murder than about anger, women's frustration at not being heard.

Women's voices are, in fact, loud and eloquent here, particularly when directed against the nuclear threat—though to what extent they are heard is not clear. On April 16, to celebrate the publication of *Over Our Dead Bodies*, a group of prominent women—Sheila Rowbotham, Julie Christie, Fay Weldon, Susannah York, Angela Carter and Jill Craigie (a journalist and also Labor Party leader Michael Foot's wife)—addressed a large crowd, mostly women, jammed into beautiful Central Hall, opposite Westminster Abbey. The last speaker, Joan Ruddock, one of the leading spokespeople for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, urged the audience to "bring the men along, they're lagging far behind." Then, as an all-woman rock band played a final tune, everyone rose from their seats and danced in the aisles.

The same week, writers, editors and others in the publishing industry met to form an antinuclear professional group. The assembly was two-thirds women; those who volunteered for the organizing committee were almost all women. The first person to raise her hand was Paula Milne, whose recent television play, *A Sudden Wrench*, concerned a middle-aged housewife suffering from empty-nest feelings who decides to become a plumber's assistant—and who, despite hard work and the mockery of her male workmates, sees it through. Milne also wrote the current television series, *S.W.A.L.K.*, beloved by young girls, which juxtaposes a teenage girl's True Love fantasies with the real-life plights of her too-early-pregnant, too-early-married older sister and her neglected mother, unable to find a job after twenty years at home.

If the connections between feminism and the antinuclear movement need further demonstration, there is the dramatic fact of the Greenham Common women, still out there in the mud of Tory Berkshire, fifty miles from London, immovably planted for a year and a half now around the American air base where ninety-six cruise missiles are due to be deployed this December. When the original peace march to Greenham in the fall of 1981 ended with four women chaining themselves, suffragist-style, to the fence encircling the base, a resistance began which grew to 30,000 women last December. This past Easter weekend the number soared to 70,000, men and women this time; they formed a human chain along fourteen miles of hilly green country roads connecting Greenham to Aldermaston (where atomic weapons research is conducted) to Burghfield (site of an atomic weapons factory). The C.N.D. arranged for buses and directed traffic, but the fire at the heart of the demonstration was the forty-odd women camped at the air base fence, who have held their ground despite the rain and chill of English winters (and indeed springs),



DRAWINGS BY MONICA INCISA

Barbara Koenig Quart teaches literature and film at the College of Staten Island and has written for Cineaste, Film Quarterly, Massachusetts Review *and* Social Policy.

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and despite legal harassment and attempts to evict them.

The Greenham Common women have succeeded in capturing not only the imagination of the country but its media—as America's Women's Pentagon Action never managed to do, perhaps because in trying to bring together too many issues it alienated many who might have stood with it simply against nuclear weapons. The women have had almost daily coverage for months on the TV news and on the *Guardian*'s front page. There have been pictures of the December all-woman rally, to which participants were asked to bring something they loved, so that the nine-mile fence around the air base was hung with photographs of families, postcards of favorite places, children's dolls, bright-colored wool and ribbon, even a wedding dress. There have been pictures of women climbing over the fence on New Year's Day, of women doing a jig in front of the court in Newbury in support of those being tried within for "breaching the peace" and in front of Holloway Prison in support of those who were imprisoned. The faces in the pictures keep changing, but there are a lot of them, young and middle-aged and elderly too (the oldest woman who went over the fence was 74), good-humored and determined and linked in spirited camaraderie.

The demonstrators spread their message in other ways as well, one of which I witnessed later that same Easter weekend, at the annual Ideal Home Exhibition. Amid the vast milling crowds, the kitchen cabinets and the lighting fixtures, right across from the stall where the Royal Navy was offering promotional material for the cruise missile, a band of Greenham Common women unfolded colorful cloth banners and posters: "WHO Breaches the Peace?" "Home Improvement—Why Bother?" "Ideal Home—But Will It Survive A Nuclear War?" Sitting on the floor around an artificial fire—"the ideal peace camp"—they sang peace songs ("Women for peace all over the world, stand up and say NO") while they threw a ball of wool around the circle until they had woven a web linking themselves together.

Like the string spider webs they weave on bushes and across woody paths at the peace camp, the Greenham Common women radiate far beyond the small core who maintain the vigil. Without leaders and without directives, they frustrate police attempts to siphon off those in charge. Women outside the peace camp, some of whom have stayed there for a time, involve their unions, duplicate and distribute announcements, send food and blankets. Those who actually live at Greenham Common are a tiny fraction of those making it happen. And other peace camps are springing up all over the country. Women, no longer left behind by the warriors but standing with their children on the nuclear front lines, are choosing to live as soldiers in order to fend off war.

Left-wing dramatists have dominated the London stage for the last decade, but it's only recently that a strong women's theater has emerged here. Most of the better plays by women—Nell Dunn's *Steaming*, Claire Luckham's *Trafford Tanzi*, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, Catharine Hayes's *Skirmishes*—have made their way to New York, but seeing them in London is a different experience: the socialist elements, or at least the strong concern with working-class subjects and forms, are much more apparent. In her new play, *Fen* (which had a limited run here in February and will be brought to New York as part of the Britain Salutes New York Festival), Churchill gives us a darkly tragic picture of the miserably paid potato harvesters, largely women, of the dismal flatlands of Suffolk. The two major plots focus on women—both, in fact, on tortured mother-daughter relationships marked by violence and ending in madness and defeat. But there's another woman, taunted for her sexual ambiguity and independence, who concludes the play by striding across the doom-heavy stage on stilts, saying that though the very sun tell her to turn back, she won't—not for it or anyone.

On the unabashedly ideological far left, Monstrous Regiment, the group that collaborated with Churchill on an earlier play, *Vinegar Tom*, recently put on a production at Drill Hall of *Fourth Wall*, by Dario Fo and Franca Rame. It's a two-woman play, full of clowning, singing, dancing, strange sound effects. From its uncritical embrace of imprisoned West German terrorist Ulrike Meinhof, to its oddball rendering of *Alice in Wonderland*, in which everything turns into a pursuing penis as Alice struggles to be her own person, *Fourth Wall* is by turns appalling and exhilarating—a necessary outer limit.

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Drill Hall, which puts on a great deal of feminist drama, followed *Fourth Wall* with Julia Pascal's *Far Above Rubies*, a spirited although didactic four-woman play that moves back and forth between the Jewish and the Islamic worlds, showing how both religious orthodoxies keep women in subjection. That the play is ultimately more sympathetic to women's possibilities under Judaism provides a counterweight to the troubled editorial, just issued, in which *Spare Rib* defends its pro-Palestinian stance despite a strong negative response from many readers.

Lovely and lively women's energies are at large, then, along with all the rest of the extravagant budding and blooming and chirping of the London spring. Not that there isn't plenty of erosion and depletion too. But forty-four women started the new year off by dancing on the missile silos, and the woman on stilts tells the sun that nothing can stop her now. □

Where the Boys Aren't

TODD GITLIN

THE HEARTS OF MEN: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment. *By Barbara Ehrenreich. Anchor/Doubleday. 206 pp. $13.95.*

MINOR CHARACTERS. *By Joyce Johnson. Houghton Mifflin. 262 pp. $13.95.*

If the specter that haunts the American home is that of the woman walking out the door, Barbara Ehrenreich tells us in her stunningly subversive new book, our culture is once again deceiving us. Backlash panic has inverted the truth of the sexual war, which is that the family is threatened not because women want to get out but because men do.

Ehrenreich argues that men have been plotting their escape for thirty years because they resent having to support dependent wives and children. In earlier days, men succeeded in organizing the wage system around their breadwinner status, thereby justifying their higher pay. There was a hard economic reason why women needed to catch men and why men, having something to lose, wriggled on the hook. American popular culture has acknowledged this state of affairs in countless images: the elusive hero of westerns who rode into town only to ride out again; the grimacing Thurber husbands squeezed by grasping, all-devouring wives; Superman and Philip Marlowe and Jack Kerouac's wandering heroes.

But the breadwinner ethic has been collapsing since the 1950s, Ehrenreich maintains, and the hearts of men have been breaking away: before there were liberated women there was male flight and the threat and dream of it. This elegantly simple idea enables Ehrenreich to grasp a remarkable amount of recent cultural history. What could seem to have less in common than the *Playboy* philosophy and the Beat Generation? With iconoclastic glee, Ehrenreich links them not only with each other but with the cardiological hue and cry about the dangers of Type A behavior, the counterculture, the human potential movement, men's groups, the fitness cult and even feminism itself. In a brisk, witty and compact—if at times breathless—fashion, she interprets Hugh Hefner, Jack Kerouac, Timothy Leary, Abraham Maslow and Charles Reich as a choir chanting in unison to men: Don't let the wife and kids drag you down. Since she focuses on packaged images of mass culture, her evidence is sometimes stretched: her picture of the counterculture draws far too heavily on the *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Look* and *Life* versions; and as she briefly acknowledges, not all men's groups conspire to leave women in the alimony-less lurch. Still, the force of an insight isn't damaged by some exaggeration. All in all, I can't think of a more compelling and ingenious assault on recent hip culture.

Ehrenreich's case is also timely, for it addresses the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment. As she correctly notes, the campaign against the E.R.A. was largely a women's movement, capitalizing on women's fear of losing the economic support of men. "In the ideology of American antifeminism," she writes, "it is almost impossible to separate the distrust of men from the hatred of feminists, or to determine with certainty which is the prior impulse." She cites a

Todd Gitlin is the author of The Whole World Is Watching *(University of California Press) and the forthcoming* Inside Prime Time *(Pantheon).*

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"The addict, like the football fan, the bowler, and the member of a college history department, may have a high regard for the activity in which he and his peers engage."

In THE HARDEST DRUG, John Kaplan suggests that there will be more hope of solving society's heroin problem if some of the surrounding myths are demolished. One of these is that we can cure addiction.

The use of the word "cure," Kaplan points out, presumes that heroin addiction is a disease. He proposes that it is, rather, a life style—and an attractive one. "The most common self-image of the heroin addict is that of an outlaw. (The alcoholic's, on the other hand, tends to be that of a failure.) And outlaws are regarded as living exciting, romantic lives."

Perhaps in no other book has the complexity of the heroin problem been so extensively and expertly detailed. James Q. Wilson, writing in The New Republic, called it, "An exceptionally clear and accurate summary of what we know about the drug and its effect on people and on crime rates, and a balanced account of our efforts to treat addicts and curb trafficking."

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1980 speech "in defense of the Christian family" by antiabortion leader Mrs. Randy Engel, who said: "Men desire sex without responsibility. They become unmanly and frightened by the thought of having to assume economic responsibility for a family: They instinctively try to escape." Feminism, says Ehrenreich, has failed to fathom the depths of women's structural dependence; in a way, feminists have failed to reckon with the force of their own analysis of the economy's bias against women: "While the feminist analysis spoke to the housewife's anger and frustration, the antifeminist analysis spoke to her fear—fear that she might, after all, be a parasite whose support rested on neither love nor accomplishment, but only 'obligation.' At bottom the antifeminists accepted the most cynical masculine assessment of the heterosexual bond: that men are at best half-hearted participants in marriage and women are lucky to get them."

Mainstream feminism's embrace of the goal of female financial independence has "proved to be too radical for an influential minority of women. . . . It is as if, facing the age-old insecurity of the family wage system, women chose opposite strategies: either to get out (figuratively speaking) and fight for equality of income and opportunity, or to stay home and attempt to bind men more tightly to them." Feminists have noted that men pay precious little alimony and child support, but (no fault of their own) haven't been able to come up with a solution, while antifeminists have "offered a way to hold on to a man." (Ehrenreich might have mentioned Marabel Morgan's Total Woman as the answer to the Vanishing Man.) Meanwhile, to use the sociologist Diana Pearce's term, poverty is being "feminized": more than two out of three adults below the official poverty line are women, many of them refugees from the middle class whom divorce sent plummeting down the class scale.

The pivot is economics, in Ehrenreich's view, and if her book has a sizable shortcoming, it's the other side of her insistence that men's hearts are out the door because their minds are on the bottom line. Admittedly, this is an important truth. There's evidence that the poorer a married man, the more likely he is to leave his wife; high salaries make for longer marriages, which is consistent with Ehrenreich's view that—most? many?—men are calculating machines doing cost-benefit analyses.

But economics is only part of the story. It does not explain why men get married—in numbers, as she wittily points out, equal to women. Men do not live by the hope of cheap domestic labor alone. Ehrenreich's scorn for pop psychology extends too far, toward a dismissal of emotional dependencies—and ambivalences—altogether. She briefly acknowledges that men, like women, marry for love and security, but doesn't incorporate this fact into her scheme of things. Likewise, men break away partly because of the psychic terrors of dependency, the ways in which long-term commitment rekindles the unnamable needs and rages of infancy. Attention to the psychology of male dependency—as in Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* and Lillian B. Rubin's new *Intimate Strangers*—would actually have strengthened Ehrenreich's formidable analysis of the ways culture is arrayed against love.

But this is little more than a quibble in the face of a provocative and original argument. Ehrenreich can be acerbic when her scorn is aroused, but she ends with a moving vision of "some renewal of loyalty and trust between adult men and women" on equal terms. The Me Generation has to yield to a We Generation, else we will inhabit a world in which we are left to size one another up as singles-bar consumables. Ehrenreich hopes "we might meet as rebels together—not against each other but against a social order that condemns so many of us to meaningless or degrading work in return for a glimpse of commodified pleasures, and condemns all of us to the prospect of mass annihilation." Surely that is the core of a feminist vision for the rest of the millenium—and beyond.

It isn't Joyce Johnson's major purpose, but *Minor Characters*, her lovely, poignant memoir of her years in the Beat scene, makes plain just how fragile was the independence that so many

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male runaways thought they were living out. Her lover Jack Kerouac, the master iconographer of male revolt in the 1950s, was devoted to his mother and to male company in a way he could never be to a sexual partner. The touching cover picture—the photographic equivalent of Johnson's luminous prose—reveals a great deal: Kerouac in the foreground, illuminated by a neon BAR sign, head cocked back, heavy-lidded eyes gazing out with studied, studly arrogance; the "minor character," Johnson, in the background shadows, clutching her purse, eyes closed, facing off to the side, waiting for her man. Jack was always looking to new adventures with his buddies, though after some epiphanies and much booze and more despair, at the end of his open road the only home he could be counted on to return to was his mother's.

One moment of truth in Johnson's account comes when Kerouac agrees to drive a friend's car into town. Kerouac and Johnson get in the car; he crawls down the road until the friend's house is out of sight, and then he abandons it. "I was astonished," Johnson writes, "when he told me he'd always been a passenger rather than a driver." The apostle of the road couldn't run the archetypal American machine. What more pathetic symbol could there be of the dependency concealed within the freedom to keep moving?

The beauty of Johnson's book is that all the characters are for real. No one is either sentimentalized or brutalized by caricature. The female Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns—Elise Cowan, Hettie Cohen, Edie Parker—long mythologized (often self-mythologized too) as attendants and spoilsports in their famous boyfriends' courts, come into their own as women who stayed in the shadows of their men's freedom partly because they wanted their own but had no language for the desire. Fitfully coming to self-consciousness, they prefigured feminism. And Kerouac, however boozy or woman-hating, isn't trivialized either. *Minor Characters* glows with affection, as well as regret and pain for the waste of strong energies and high spirits in the Beat circles.

In the long, long haul toward mutual respect between the sexes, these two books, in different ways, are memorable for evoking the losses that grown boys have inflicted on women in the name of manhood—and for reviving, yes, the promise that someday we'll get it right. □

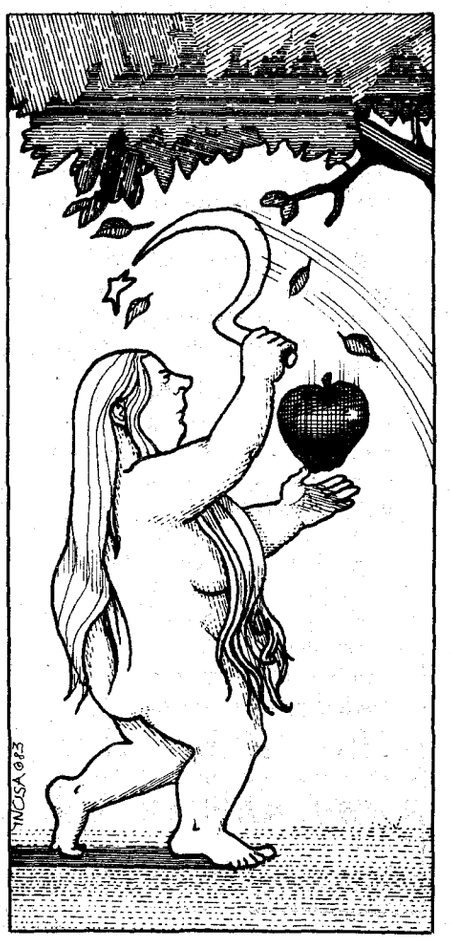
Utopianism: Feminist & Socialist

ELLEN DuBOIS

EVE AND THE NEW JERUSALEM: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century. *By Barbara Taylor. Pantheon. 394 pp. $19.95. Paper $9.95.*

Barbara Taylor's *Eve and the New Jerusalem* is a rich, sprawling history of British socialism before Marx, told from the viewpoints of women and of feminism. The history of utopian—or Owenite—socialism has been written many times, sometimes to celebrate, sometimes to condemn, but never before with the historical experiences of women and the politics of marriage and the family at its center. This is an odd neglect, for although feminism, the deceptively simple demand for the political and social equality of the sexes, had its origins in the ideas and upheavals of the French Revolution, after 1820 it was utopian socialism that provided "the rights of women" its best home. Taylor has several subjects: the Owenites' ideas for revolutionizing marriage and the family as well as work and the factory; the lives of individual women activists—Fanny Wright, Anna Wheeler, Emma Martin—who propagandized for socialism's "New Moral World" while trying to live their own "masterless existences"; and above all, the history of the "upper working class and lower middle class women" who looked to socialists for guidance, as industrialization and new standards of "respectability" turned their world upside down.

Taylor's work is part of a larger project of historical reinterpretation, seeking to demonstrate that the history of socialism is rich and varied, with democratic and visionary tendencies as well as authoritarian and economist ones. This search for alternative, more libertarian socialisms in the past is closely allied to the effort to remake socialism in the present: E.P. Thompson, the British historian and antinuclear activist, has been a key figure in both efforts. Taylor cites Thompson's challenge to socialists to rebel against "the subordination of the imaginative utopian faculties . . . [the] lack of a moral self-consciousness or even a vocabulary of desire, [the] inability to project any images of the future . . . [except] the maximisation of economic growth." Feminist scholar-activists, whose ranks include Sheila Rowbotham, Linda Gordon, Meredith Tax and Mari Jo Buhle, are among those who have the most to gain from—and contribute to—this re-evaluation. In particular, their work recalls that socialism initially took as its province the entire "social question," the obligation to remedy the alienation caused by marriage and the family, as well as that produced by wage labor. In the transition from utopian socialism to Marxism, Taylor writes, "certain things were gained"—"a new strategic awareness of the obstacles facing a revolutionary movement . . . a clearer direction and focus," a deeper understanding of the causes of, and solutions to, workers' poverty and powerlessness. But Taylor reminds us that "other things were



Ellen DuBois is the author of Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America 1848-1869 *(Cornell) and* Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches *(Schocken). She teaches history and women's studies at SUNY-Buffalo.*

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lost," notably the possibility of rethinking and remaking love, sex, parenthood and friendship. Ultimately, *Eve and the New Jerusalem* presents "the case for Utopianism itself, for a style of socialist endeavor which aims to transform the whole order of social life and in so doing transforms relations between the sexes."

Taylor's account of the rise and fall of Owenism has as much significance for the history of feminism as it does for the history of socialism. If the dominant traditions of socialism took marriage and the family for granted, the same must be said of nineteenth-century feminism. Most feminists sought to protect women by elevating their domestic position, not to liberate them by challenging its basis. The Owenites provided an alternative. They repudiated marriage and the family not only as barriers to human happiness and social solidarity but as obstacles to women's freedom and equality. They identified the basic elements of "the marriage system" as the privatized family, domesticated womanhood and desexualized marriage. Their relentless criticism of this system gained much of its power and insight from the fact that it was voiced just as these new forms of family life were fastening their hold on all sectors of British society.

Taylor is particularly enthusiastic about the Owenites' repudiation of what they called "property marriage." She finds it the most "socialist" element of their analysis. Owenite feminists posed the question of women's emancipation as "How can women achieve equality of status in a society where status and power derive from wealth?" Their answer: "The only way finally to end property in women . . . was to end private property itself" and the family system based on it. They embraced the middle-class belief that "the marital tie must be emotional, not economic," and used it to criticize the middle-class reality of married women's economic, therefore emotional, dependence. To make the ideal real, the Owenites advocated a whole women's rights package of educational, economic and political reforms. They also called for liberalized divorce laws and the practice of birth control. But above all they proclaimed the necessity of abolishing the private household, and with it the dependent wife, to be replaced by free women and a more collective and social existence. In the "New Moral World," economic relations would make possible the equality of the sexes and the independence of women, not stand in their way.

The modern feminist cannot help but glory in the ambitions and ideals of the Owenites, but she must also come to terms with their ultimate failure to put them into practice. Taylor brilliantly analyzes the obstacles socialists faced in trying to bring sexual revolution and equality into the heart of working-class life. The bold proclamation that men and women should battle together as workers and live together as equals ran aground on the reality that their labor was becoming antagonistic and their domestic conflicts were growing. In the past, women had been subordinate workers in their husbands' and fathers' shops. Now this arrangement was giving way to a two-tiered industrial system of skilled workingmen in competition with cheap female labor. Meanwhile, economic insecurity was eroding the "flexible and pragmatic" sexual practices that had long prevailed among working people. "Young men who had once prided themselves on their potential as home providers" now moved about in search of work and either delayed marriage or avoided it altogether. Women could no longer count on custom and community pressure to insure that the men with whom they had sex and got pregnant would marry them. "Practices which had been perfectly acceptable . . . became symptoms of domestic insecurity and personal degradation," and "the comparative stability of legal marriage became more desirable," especially for women.

The result was conflict and competition where Owenism had promised love and harmony. In the Owenite trade unions, workingmen jettisoned their belief in "women's emancipation" to battle the female "slop-shops" that were undermining their wages. In the experimental communities, women complained about how much of the domestic labor was assigned to them and how little control they had over the work. And, most painfully, in the prolonged propaganda battle with conservative evangelicals, the socialists were unable to maintain their radical perspective on marriage and the family. The Owenite vision had been of a love life constrained not by contract or convention but only by desire. It crumbled not only because of its simplistic approach to intimacy but because of the growing strains on marriage and the conflicting relations men and women

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had to it: in the new industrial age, women needed husbands more than men needed wives.

In other words, part of what we learn from *Eve and the New Jerusalem* is that "the miserable story of the movement's collapse" is not merely one of "class based conflict and recriminations" but sex-based antagonism as well. But although this felled the Owenites, it did not stop feminism. On the contrary, the growing conflict between the sexes was the medium through which feminism grew. Women became aware that their position was one of subordination to men and that only a movement organized and led by women themselves would ever remedy their discontent. If Marxism set socialism back by limiting its purview to class relations and the house of labor, it also moved it forward by demonstrating that conflict and struggle, not harmony and reconciliation, advance history. This is as true for the liberation of women as it is for that of workers. The very conflicts that were undermining Owenism were helping to generate a women's movement, and it was in this context that all the different visions of women's emancipation, including Owenism, would have to be resolved. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the utopian socialists' proposals for communal living and sexual freedom remained an important, if minor, tendency in feminist thought. Some of the most advanced thinkers of the women's movement, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Annie Besant, were influenced by them.

The biggest criticism one can make of Taylor is that her passion for the Owenites and utopianism somewhat blinds her to this conclusion. The Owenites' naïve but bold program for sexual equality and freedom was not merely "the dream that failed." It was the last act in the prehistory of feminism. □

Fit to Be Tied

ANN JONES

COMING TO POWER: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M. *Edited by members of Samois. Alyson Publications. 281 pp. $7.95.*

AGAINST SADOMASOCHISM: A Radical Feminist Analysis. *Edited by Robin Ruth Linden, Darlene R. Pagano, Diana E. H. Russell and Susan Leigh Star. Frog in the Well Press. 212 pp. $7.95.*

"Sadomasochism has become a buzz word. It is tacked onto just about anything hated or feared." So writes Katherine Davis of Samois, a San Francisco-based organization of lesbian sadomasochists, in the introduction to this new and expanded edition of the group's anthology, *Coming to Power*. "We are told," she says, that "S/M is responsible for practically every ill and inequity, large and small, that the world has ever known, including rape, racism, classism, spouse abuse, difficult interpersonal relationships, fascism, a liking of vaginal penetration, political repression in Third World countries, and so on."

Surely millions upon millions of people pass weeks at a time with scarcely a thought of sadomasochism; when they think of it at all, it is as a nasty perversion, not as a global bugaboo. Nevertheless, the embattled S/M advocates of Samois and a few of their exasperated radical feminist antagonists perceive lesbian S/M as a matter of enormous widespread concern. This misconception, bordering paranoia, suggests how far afield some small contingents of the women's movement have marched.

One of the most powerful notions of the movement, when it reawakened in the 1960s, was "the personal is political." It meant that our personal lives must be seen in political terms and implied that our politics, in turn, could reshape our personal lives. More than a slogan, it stirred profound changes in millions of families and impelled collective political action on dozens of issues, from job discrimination to abortion rights. Now lesbian sadomasochism, a personal hang-up if ever there was one, has gone political. It is the subject of an increasingly hot quarrel among a few movement women, and the subject of these two thoroughly dispiriting books—lamentable not because they are unevenly written but because, while diverting attention

Ann Jones is a contributor to the collection Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography *(Bantam) and author of* Women Who Kill *(Fawcett).*

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from the continuing political, economic and social struggles of the women's movement at large, they make weight of dangerous foolishness.

Pat Califia, a Samois founder and self-avowed sadist, recaps the turgid story of this quarrel in a one-sided but useful historical essay. Public discussion of lesbian sadomasochism, she says, began in Bay area gay papers in 1976. By June 1978 enough S/M lesbians had surfaced to form a support group, primarily a social group arising out of "S/M lesbians' need to find women to play with." They named the group Samois after the estate of a lesbian "dominatrix" in *The Story of O*; had they foreseen that they would "become known on a national scale," Califia says, they would have picked a name easier to pronounce. (It's Sam-wah.) For their first public outing, in San Francisco's Gay Freedom Day parade in June 1978, they wore full leather and metal regalia, despite protests from parade monitors, and chained a woman across the hood of a jeep "to make it look more like a float."

When the San Francisco feminist group Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (W.A.V.P.M.) laid plans to host the first national anti-pornography conference, in November 1978, Samois applied to conduct a workshop on lesbian S/M. W.A.V.P.M., Califia says, did not reply. Samois women went to the conference anyway to present their workshop. No one attended. When W.A.V.P.M. held a forum at Berkeley in April 1980 to present its political analysis of lesbian sadomasochism, Samois picketed and handed out defamatory leaflets. When Barnard College held its annual "The Scholar and the Feminist" conference in April 1982 on the theme "Towards a Politics of Sexuality," and scheduled workshops on lesbian sadomasochism, members of Women Against Pornography, New York's counterpart to W.A.V.P.M., picketed and handed out defamatory leaflets. The dispute had not so much spread as hopscotched from coast to coast.

Samois showed up for the 1979 Gay Freedom Day parade in new T-shirts proclaiming "The Leather Menace," an allusion to the "lavender menace," the plain old-fashioned "vanilla" lesbianism that divided feminists in the early days of the movement. Members sold Samois's first publication, "What Color is Your Handkerchief?," a 44-page pamphlet which featured a code for signaling your sexual tastes by the color of a hankie (gray for bondage, black for whipping, white lace for "Victorian scenes," and so on) displayed in the back pocket of your jeans; on the left to indicate what you do, on the right to show what you like to have done to you. The pamphlet earned negative reviews in many gay and feminist papers, which also declined to print Samois's rejoinders. Califia's own lesbian sex manual, *Sapphistry*, published in 1981, drew a similar response.

Seeing themselves as a persecuted minority involved in a libertarian struggle, Samois solicited articles for *Coming to Power*, a "real book, with original material . . . a more graphic, erotic book . . . aimed at an audience of S/M lesbians, not an audience of . . . detractors."

"Manuscripts poured in from all over the country," Califia writes—some 120 in all, of which 31 appear in this book. First published in November 1981, it sold out its print run of 2,000 in six months.

Coming to Power is a mixed bag, reflecting the "different political, sexual and vested interests" of its editors, "an on-going group of five to eight women." Half a dozen confessional pieces tout the thrills of flagellation and strenuous dildoing. Some of the seventeen pieces of fiction and fantasy are pastoral utopian tales involving horses and cats and women with names like Elura, Rima and Mirel; others creep into lesbian porn, with blow-by-blow accounts of bondage, shit-eating and gang rape. (Samois takes no official position on pornography. Some members defend all porn on libertarian grounds; others support the feminist antipornography movement but regard lesbian porn as "different.")

Lest there be any mistake about what goes on in lesbian S/M, an essay entitled "Love Means Never Having to Say Oops, A Lesbian's Guide to S/M Safety" offers lots of helpful advice: "Keep the razor blade perpendicular to the surface of the skin, as cuts made at an angle take longer to heal and are thus more susceptible to infection." "The needle should be inserted into the lower, upper or side part of the nipple, rather than the middle to avoid piercing the milk ducts." "The way to drip wax from a candle safely is to let a drop or two fall at a time." "Never . . . tie a rope around anyone's neck with a knot that you haven't tested for tightening

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down." This is not vanilla sex.

Few essays directly address the political issues raised by S/M. In "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M," Gayle Rubin, Samois's chief theorist, sees "the current wave of repression against dissenting sexuality"—police and liquor commission crackdowns on gay bathhouses and leather bars—as the first surge in a general erosion of homosexual rights. But the issue of gay rights is complicated by the question of where to draw the line on "acceptable" sexual conduct. Gay civil rights have always been so tenuous that many gay activists have drawn the line somewhere above S/M and declined to defend gay S/M devotees from censure. Rubin would draw no line at all. She urges sexual freedom for all "populations of erotic dissidents"—including "transpeople," prostitutes, sadomasochists and "cross-generational lovers" (a category that presumably includes "man-boy lovers" and practitioners of "intra-family sex," otherwise known by the grim euphemism, "consensual incest"). In short, whatever turns you on. Comparing "minority sexual communities" to "religious heretics . . . persecuted by the state, the mental health establishment, social welfare agencies, and the media," Rubin complains: "When you are a sex pervert, the institutions of society do not work for you, and often work against you."

Radical feminism works against you too, as the twenty-five essays of *Against Sadomasochism* make clear. The Samois lesbians, many of whom *never* called themselves feminists, admittedly always enjoyed a sleazy sex party more than politics; but they slapped together a ragtag ideological straw person (how could a committee called The Ministry of Truth do otherwise?) and a bunch of radical feminists ganged up to beat it to death with sticks. *Against Sadomasochism* was put together last year after W.A.V.P.M. declined to take an official public stand against lesbian S/M on the grounds that there might be *something* to learn from it. (Some feminists still argue that female sexuality, too long bent to male desire and definitions, should not now be cut to fit feminist doctrine.) With essays by such heavyweight theorists as Susan Griffin, Diana E. H. Russell and Robin Morgan, the book was meant to challenge S/M proselytizing and to defend radical feminists from charges of sexual imperialism

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and Victorian prudery. In these aims it succeeds, but because the theoretical case for S/M is so flimsy, *Against Sadomasochism* becomes a minor classic of ideological overkill.

The issues are few. Samois accuses feminist prigs of trying to limit "erotic exploration" by dictating a party line on sex. Radical feminists seem content to let Samois explore so long as it doesn't drag a feminist flag into the territory. Feminism as a political ideology has always opposed power imbalances and coercion among people and institutions—lesbians included. So the key issue becomes "consent."

Samois claims that S/M does not coerce or oppress. Its practitioners consent to participate. But radical feminists argue that "consent" is meaningless when people already suffer the coercion of male/female sex roles, of which sadism and masochism are only the logical, though absurd, extensions. Consent to one's own powerlessness does not justify the abuse; it merely announces how thoroughly one has been taken in by the values of the powerful. "To degrade someone, even with that person's expressed consent," writes Hilde Hein, "is to *endorse* the degradation of persons. . . . For if some people may be humiliated and despised, all may be." In that sense, the personal "choice" of S/M is political indeed, and to radical feminists looks altogether too much like traditional heterosexual politics.

No wonder the radical feminists take exception to Samois's every point. Samois argues that S/M provides a healthy cathartic outlet for aggressive impulses; radical feminists counter with the same psychological studies they cite in denouncing pornography, studies which conclude that "make-believe" violence only whets the appetite for real violence. S/M lesbians want to "explore" their own "erotic nature," not only for themselves but as an act of public research on behalf of other women who, they assume, must harbor the same muscular gremlins; radical feminists want to change the social conditioning that masquerades as "nature." Gayle Rubin wants all the world's "perverts" accepted by society; radical feminists would rather change society than join it. Samois women think of themselves as "erotic dissidents"; Ti-Grace Atkinson declared in a 1977 essay reprinted in *Against Sadomasochism*: "By no stretch of the imagination is the women's movement a movement for sexual liberation. . . . Feminists are

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women who are sick to death of being defined sexually."

These, then, are cross-purposes. The deadlock is not eased by Samois's penchant for Orwellian newspeak. One example:

> Having the slap in my repertoire of sensual/loving behaviors means that I do not always have to rely on the kiss to express affection. I like to express affection openly, but always kissing and saying "I love you" is certainly repetitive, often lacking in imagination, and can become cloying. A cuff says "I love you" too, but in a sharper, less sweet way.

This kind of thinking, characteristic of *Coming to Power*, sometimes baffles the radical feminist theorists. Commenting on the "obvious" theoretical inconsistency of lesbian S/M with lesbian feminism, philosopher Sarah Lucia Hoaglund asks, "If you have on a [mismatched] pair of socks and cannot see that they do not match, what can I say?" That should be that—unless, of course, you have a sock fetish, in which case you could start a group, wear a T-shirt ("The Argyle Menace"), march in a parade, even (Goddess help us) write a book. And if any failed to praise the salubrious merits of your clashing socks, you could accuse them of sartorial imperialism, prudery, suppression of free inquiry and persecution of hosiery dissidents.

It is not surprising that some in the women's movement—burned out by political struggles and dismayed to see this man's world, for all the recent alterations, very much intact—should turn from the body politic to the body, once again mistaking sex for freedom. (In a parallel though more wholesome retreat from the political arena, some heterosexual feminists recently rediscovered childbirth and wrote books about it.) In the 1920s, postlude to a great period of feminist activity, women abandoned political action and personal careers for marriage, motherhood and sexual "fulfillment." Commenting in 1926 on seventeen autobiographical essays written for *The Nation* by discouraged feminists, behaviorist John B. Watson smugly noted: "Militancy passes as soon as the woman, by a trial-and-error process, finds sex adjustment."*

It is not surprising, then, but it is disheartening to see the women of Samois mistaking their own kinky "sex adjustment" for politics. As one woman puts it, "My feelings of powerlessness in this world fill me with a great desire to be powerful and being top [the sadist] does it in a safe way. I get to be powerful and someone loves me for it." That this momentary domination of another woman seems like power casts judgment on a world which affords women so little sense of mastery; but it is not *real* power—power which makes some mark upon the larger world. It is merely a delusion, an opiate.

It is more disheartening to see feminist thinkers theorizing against S/M while other women's "rights" slip away. In *Against Sadomasochism*, poet Audre Lorde, thinking about "other more pressing and immediately life-threatening issues facing . . . women in this racist, conservative and repressive period," writes, "The question I ask, over and over, is *who is profitting from this*?"

You can bet your socks it's not women. □

* The *Nation* essays were reprinted by the Feminist Press in 1978 as *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties*.

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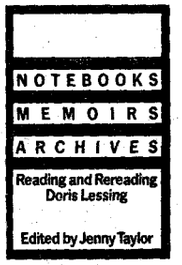

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Lights...Camera...Daddy!

MOLLY HASKELL

Back in the old days, when mommies were mommies and daddies were daddies, the one who Knew Best came home from the office a mite gruff and tired, perhaps, and was withdrawn at the dinner table, but we knew he'd been working for us and loved us. He didn't need to prove it by "speaking our language" (God forbid!) or giving us "quality time" or babbling and blubbering over past crimes and future promises. Today, being a male parent is a full-time job (there are rumors that certain California universities are giving degrees in it). And men, if we are to believe Hollywood movies, are doing so well at it that mothers may soon become obsolete.

In an endless procession of what the British critic Raymond Durgnat has dubbed "male weepies"—*Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Author! Author!*, *Tribute*, *Ordinary People*, *The Great Santini*, *On Golden Pond*, *The Champ*, *Table for Five*, *Man, Woman and Child*, *Six Weeks*—men are discovering how *good* they are at loving their children. In juicily androgynous roles, actors like Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight compete for the Mother of the Year Award.

From these man-child paradises women are either relegated to the wings or expelled altogether. In *Kramer vs. Kramer*, the villain is a watered-down feminism: Meryl Streep abandons her family to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of self-realization. In *Author! Author!*, playwright Israel Horovitz's fantasy of fame, fortune and fatherhood, promiscuous-longings-over-which-she-has-no-control prompt Tuesday Weld to desert. In *Table for Five*, the mother dies halfway through the film—one of the more dignified exits provided for a woman. The final image in these films is usually of father and child together—on a doorstep (Donald Sutherland and Timothy Hutton in *Ordinary People*), on the tearful brink of separation (Martin Sheen and his bastard son in *Man, Woman and Child*), playing touch football in the yard (Robert Duvall and his stepson in *Tender Mercies*), in a backstage huddle (Pacino and his oldest son in *Author! Author!*). In an odd permutation, *Table for Five* fades out on father and *father*. Voight, a former golf pro and flop of a father, having learned about love and parental responsibility on a Greek island cruise with his kids, wants to keep them when Mom—his ex-wife—dies. But so does their stepfather (Richard Crenna), who not only loves the kids but pays the orthodontic bills. Solution: Love Daddy and Money Daddy reach some sort of mystical and never-explained compromise, and walk off together into the Grecian sunset.

The open misogyny of these films goes beyond the censoriousness of those earlier Hollywood fables in which women were penalized or shown as unfeminine for neglecting their maternal duties. When Joan Crawford or Rosalind Russell got uppity, they had to be brought down a peg, but at heart was the preservation of the American family. There was always a male bias: in *Woman of the Year*, Katharine Hepburn's cosmopolitan reporter was ridiculed for being unable to fry an egg, while Spencer Tracy was not only a regular guy of the meat-and-potatoes school but a better parent to their adopted child. Mothers could never get it quite right, being either too remiss or too self-sacrificing. Still, the basic impulse was to housebreak the woman rather than to banish her, reflecting the collective thinking of moguls who, however hypocritically, were family men, believers in purity, honor, motherhood and romance.

In recent years the sanctity of the family has gone from being a joke, courtesy of the Me Decade, to being a subject for nostalgia, with men resurrecting it according to their specifications. Hollywood is now in the hands of a new breed of producers, directors and screenwriters, most of whom have been divorced at least once and are governed by a different set of conscious and unconscious motives, which inevitably find their way into movies: the guilt of divorced (or workaholic) fathers for having placed their happiness over that of their children; anger at their own neglectful or repressed fathers, which leads them to try to right old wrongs, either by making Dad over (*Tribute*, *On Golden Pond*) or by showing how loving *they* can be; vengeance toward ex-wives and feminists for withdrawing all

Molly Haskell is the author of From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies *(Penguin). She frequently reviews films for* Vogue.

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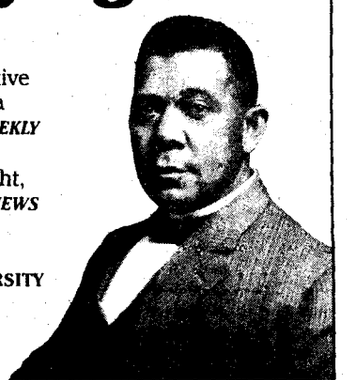

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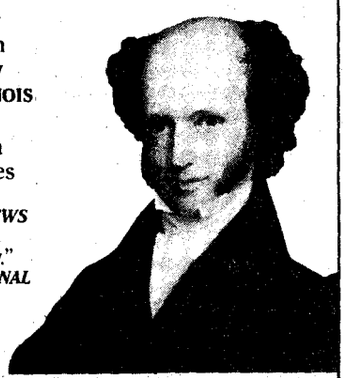

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those emotional and domestic props.

Last, but by no means least, is the issue of custody. Mothers, as we know, are no longer automatically awarded custody in divorce cases. The vast majority of fathers do not sue for custody of their children, but for those who do the odds of getting it are very good: according to recent statistics, men win one half to two thirds of court battles. In view of this development, movies testifying to men's superior qualifications for parenthood take on a slightly sinister tone.

In an interview in *American Film* magazine, Dustin Hoffman put the case succinctly. Discussing his preparations for *Tootsie*—in which he plays the first genuinely mainstream feminist heroine of our era—he credited the character to his work in *Kramer vs. Kramer*: "We improvised a lot in that movie—we improvised a courtroom scene and at one point I had a good emotional thing going. The judge said, 'Why should you have the child?' I said, 'Because I'm his mother.' And I didn't know I said it and I couldn't get Bob Benton and Stanley Jaffe to use it in the cut—they thought it was gilding the lily."

In most of the father-child valentines, what begins as a stopgap measure—Dad lurching into the breach when Mom makes her exit—ends as a paean to the emotional and domestic virtuosity of the male. By the end of *Kramer*, Hoffman has not only figured out what grade his son is in at school, he has mastered the art of making French toast. Jon Voight learns the names of his children's teachers, Al Pacino the correct proportion of bleach to detergent for white-as-snow laundry. Their accomplishments, it should be noted, stop short of potty training and diaper changing, the messier and harsher realities of child rearing—their children are all at an "interesting" age, marginally self-sufficient and adorable. In the fantasy world of many of these films, father and son regress into an ideal world of all-male permissiveness.

As fathers and their children form a mutual admiration society, an interesting exchange takes place. Men find in their kiddies' loving eyes the hero worship once provided by their wives. And conversely, simply by taking on the job of child rearing, men give it a dignity and status it never has when women do it. It's known as the men-upgrade-the-neighborhood-women-ruin-property-values phenomenon. In contrast to recent findings about just how much (i.e.,

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how *little*) housework men actually do, movie heroes plunge in and take over, and bask in a self-congratulatory glow besides, all without losing their status as Real Men.

As befits a world in which parenthood is up for grabs, sometimes the nurturing father is a father surrogate. Judd Hirsch, for example, brings ethnic "soul" to the psychoanalyst-as-nurturing-parent in *Ordinary People* and the detective-as-nurturing-parent in *Without a Trace*. (The latter, incidentally, was directed by *Kramer* producer—and divorced father—Stanley Jaffe.) Against the frigid mother (Mary Tyler Moore) of *Ordinary People* and the stoic, overeducated mother (Kate Nelligan) of *Without a Trace*, Hirsch counterposes directness and feeling.

The Nelligan mother is an interesting person—she's modern, complex and, unlike the Moore mother, no villain. Her refusal to "let go" after her son is kidnapped is the source of the movie's emotional power, but at the same time we are made to feel that her reserve is somehow unnatural, not quite "womanly." She's an infinitely more vital and capable parent than the father (David Dukes), who's hopeless on every level—but then it was her outstripping him professionally that "unmanned" him and destroyed their marriage.

Nostalgia for the old-fashioned wife is the spark that ignites *Tender Mercies*, a beautiful, ballad-like film, conservative to the core. Duvall's dissolute country singer is redeemed by the love of a "good" (i.e., simple, unchallenging) woman after the wreckage wrought by his hard-driving, country-singing and competitive former wife.

But then (what's a girl to do?) in *Man, Woman and Child*, a preposterous fantasy from the sugary pen of Erich Segal, the "good," faithful wife (Blythe Danner) winds up with egg on her face, while the independent, libidinous Frenchie who gives Martin Sheen his son represents the ideal: she's self-employed; she doesn't want to marry; she wants You and only You to create a beautiful baby boy in her womb, after which you will be free to depart, no strings; and she dies young and far away, your name on her lips, but not in reproach.

Run these fantasies through the tabulator and what do we get? The best woman is a dead woman, especially a dead independent woman! Next best is one who pulls a disappearing act in a manner that reflects badly on her character rather than on her husband's. Third preference (where the woman is *determined* to hang in there and stay married) is an all-forgiving mother-wife, who looks the other way at her mate's peccadilloes and even embraces the fruit of his waywardness afterward. Although the women's magazines like to tell us we can "have it all," the message of these movies is that we can't have much of anything. The irony is that most male weepies are merchandised as women's pictures and cater to female audiences.

The mother is dead. Long live the mother. And his name is . . . fill in the blank with your favorite bankable male star. Presumably a great many women are paying good money to choke back the tears over a doting Dudley Moore or a fumbling Al Pacino or a misty-eyed Jon Voight. We ought instead to be laughing these male mothers off the screen. □

Down & Out & Black in Boston

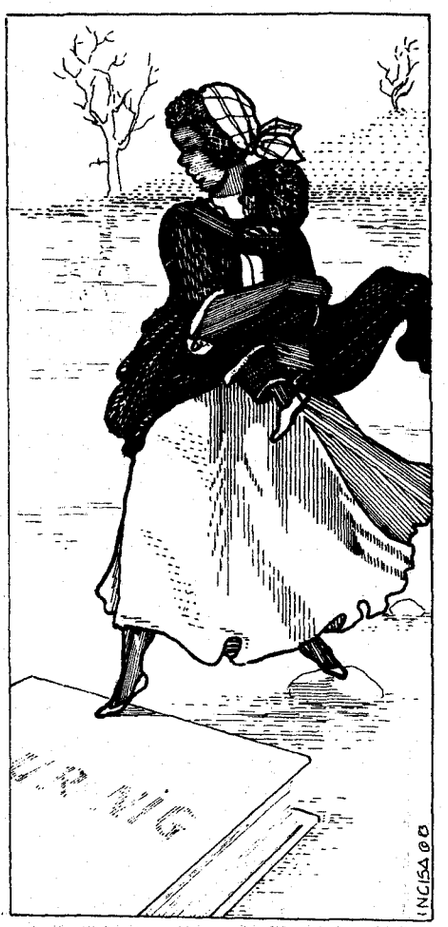
MARGO JEFFERSON

OUR NIG; OR, SKETCHES FROM THE LIFE OF A FREE BLACK. *By Harriet E. Wilson. Random House. 140 pp. $10.95. Paper $4.95.*

Poor Harriet Wilson. Neither religion, love, freedom, domesticity nor motherhood could match the power of poverty, mistreatment and ill health. Her life was obscure, the date of her death uncertain. The novel she wrote about her circumstances earned her a second death—124 years of literary oblivion.

Our Nig was published in Boston at Wilson's expense. It appeared in 1859, two years before the Civil War, a time marked by antislavery agitation, fugitive slave laws and a group of extraordinary activists that included Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, the Grimké sisters, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Wells Brown and William Lloyd Garrison. Wilson was all too aware that, with New England's moral attention turned to enslaved blacks down South, a tale of a black female indentured servant up North was ill timed. "I do not pretend to divulge every transaction in my own life, which the unprejudiced would declare unfavorable in comparison with treatment of legal bondmen," she declared in a preface designed to ease advanced minds and frail egos. "I have purposely omitted what would most provoke shame in our good anti-slavery friends at home. . . . I sincerely appeal to my colored brethren universally for patronage, hoping that they will not condemn this attempt of their sister to be erudite, but rally around me a faithful band of supporters and defenders." Alas, 'twas not to be. Even the durable feminine plea that publication would not have been attempted "but that I am forced to some experiment which shall aid me in maintaining myself and child" failed.

Only the most fragmentary records of Wilson's work and life exist. Henry Louis Gates Jr., a professor of Afro-American studies and English at Yale, came upon the novel in a Manhattan bookshop last year; through painstaking research he set about retrieving what



Margo Jefferson is a critic and teaches at New York University.

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little biographical information could be gleaned from public documents. In a thorough and excellent introduction, he analyzes the book's social and literary history, its link to contemporary slave narratives and, particularly, its use and revision of the conventions of women's sentimental fiction. From all indications, *Our Nig* was the first novel published by a black in the United States, and the first published by a black woman in English.

At the time it appeared, the question of what authority a black author's voice carried was crucial; so was the literary struggle over whether fiction or nonfiction was more effective in portraying black life. *Our Nig* is at the heart of this struggle. It contains, as slave narratives invariably did, an appendix with letters from white friends verifying the tale's truth and the teller's decency. But in choosing fiction over autobiography, Wilson not only chose a form dominated by her sex; she chose one ultimately not dependent on testimonies from members of another race, and so managed to present, if not settle, those issues in a fresh way.

The book's full title is *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-Story White House, North. Showing That Slavery's Shadows Fall Even There.* Note how the tone shifts with each clause—from crude to genteel to factual to melodramatic. That progress is emphasized in the facsimile edition; each clause is given a different script. The author's line, *by "Our Nig,"* is the final coup: it's both a curt reminder of the politics of slave names and epithets and a wicked parody of the common feminine practice of publishing under coyly domestic pseudonyms like "Aunt Kitty" or "Cousin Alice."

"It is the complex interaction of race-*and*-class relationships . . . which *Our Nig* critiques for the first time in American fiction," writes Gates, and the complex interaction of race, class and sex is present from the startling opening chapters. There we meet "lonely Mag Smith," a white New Englander seduced and abandoned by a gentleman above her station—hence an outcast in her village—befriended only by Jim, a "kind-hearted African" who delivers the coal. Stirred by love, pity and dreams of marital upward mobility, Jim proposes ("she'd be as much of a prize to me as she'd fall short of coming up to the mark with white folks"). Acknowledging that "I can but do two things . . . beg my living or get it from you," Mag accepts.

Having proved a kind and dutiful husband, Jim dies, leaving behind "two pretty mulattos." Expelled from the white community, Mag takes up with Jim's business partner, who soon persuades her that they had best give the children away and seek a living elsewhere. Six-year-old Alfrado—the well-read Wilson understood the charm a Mediterranean-sounding name could bestow upon a black girl forced into servitude—is left with the white middle-class Bellmonts.

Wilson builds her broad characterizations upon well-observed foundations: the kindness or cruelty of the Bellmonts is linked with the way they view their social and economic needs and privileges. Frado's chief tormentor, Mrs. B., is a vicious social climber renowned for her brutality with servants; an indentured black enlarges her domestic and sadistic horizons. One daughter, Mary, is a gleeful follower; the other, Jane, is an invalid whose kind instincts are thwarted by her dependence. Mr. B. is good-hearted but prefers domestic quiet to upholding principles and justifies his reticence by claiming he is henpecked. His sister, Aunt Abby, has a measure of financial and marital independence, and so can sometimes risk standing by her beliefs in decency and religious equality. Brothers Jack and James, the twin pillars of good in Frado's grim world, are adored and indulged by all: Jack is a manly protector, James a spiritual mentor whose concern for her is made sexually benign by being linked to religion and illness.

With Frado, an artful creation, Wilson revises one of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s most riveting and repellent dualities. Like Topsy, she is clever and spirited, but shorn of pickaninny pranks and grotesqueries. Like Little Eva, she is the measure of adult salvation and damnation, but without the aid of Christianity. Despite the earnest efforts of Aunt Abby and James, Frado decides no heaven that could countenance Mrs. B. is worth the price of admission, and learns that defiance can win her a freedom that submission never will. (I wish Wilson had shown Frado's spirit more and attested to it less; perhaps her determination to avoid creating a little black dervish made her overly cautious. One craves more scenes like the one in which, ordered to eat from Mrs. B.'s dirty plate, Frado has the dog lick it clean first.)

Our Nig is part drama, part declaration and part documentary. Wilson sometimes tells her tale baldly; sometimes hurries it along, issuing stage directions and inserting exposition; sometimes crafts it with crisp scenes and dialogue shrewdly attuned to the rhythms and phrasings of class and character. Her tone changes continually—the result, I think, of the haste and pain with which she wrote, the mixed audience she anticipated with dread and the conflict between her gift for biting realism and her taste for genteel lyricism. She will be brusque, then fastidious; she will shift from melancholy to outrage and sarcasm.

A number of strategic touches intrigued me: how Frado is subtly paired with worthy whites because of her character rather than her mixed parentage (Wilson dwelt less than was customary on her fair skin and glossy curls), and how, like some Puck or Ariel, she sets familial and marital discord right. When, at 18, her term of servitude is over, she goes out into the world with one decent dress, a Bible, hard-won literacy and a privilege hitherto conceded only to white ladies of means in fact or fiction—a constitution too frail for housework. She learns the craft of making straw hats from a poor white woman "who could see merit beneath a dark skin"; in return, she teaches the woman "the value of useful books."

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Into this fragile peace comes Samuel, a professed fugitive slave: "a fine straight negro, whose back showed no marks of the lash, erect as if it never crouched beneath a burden. . . . She opened her heart to the presence of love—that arbitrary and inexorable tyrant." Reader, she marries him and lives to regret it—Samuel deserts her, "with the disclosure that he had never seen the South and that his illiterate harangues were humbugs for hungry abolitionists." (Let us remember that between 1847 and 1859 William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper carried sixteen exposés of blacks posing as fugitive slaves, an interesting commentary on the limited employment opportunities for free blacks in the North. Let us also remember that Frederick Douglass was criticized by more than one abolitionist for not sounding illiterate enough to be a convincing former slave.) Samuel dies of yellow fever in New Orleans; Frado, unhappily pregnant, gives birth and goes back into the world to earn her keep.

The final chapters are poignant and dissonant. As Frado drags herself from destitution to subsistence and from town to town, "watched by kidnappers, maltreated by professed abolitionists, who didn't want slaves at the South, nor niggers in their own houses, North," the narrator's voice seems about to disappear beneath the weight of its burden. But Wilson draws herself up and abruptly presents a combined autobiographical and fictional ending.

Frado prevails: "Nothing turns her from her steadfast purpose of elevating herself." And, we are told in a tone that fuses a lady's claim to modesty with a free woman's right to privacy, she merits our help—"Enough has been unrolled to demand your sympathy and aid." The closing history of the Bellmonts is briskly supplied. Frado has outlived all but Jane and her husband, who perhaps signify her hopes for a better marriage. Then, in a sweeping Old Testament image, Wilson reduces even them to minor functionaries and elevates Frado to the stature of a chosen prophet and ruler.

I'm glad that in her final imaginative vision Wilson associates herself with personal power and the salvation of a people, for, in real life, *Our Nig*'s publication brought no change in her circumstances. If, as she wrote, she had hoped it would provide for her son, it did not; he died within six months of the book's publication. If she had hoped it would provide access to the world of free blacks who traveled, wrote, preached and lectured on the major racial and sexual issues of her day (and ours), she was disappointed. That we do not know the date of Harriet Wilson's death says a great deal about the remainder of her life. □

Where's Dinner, Comrade?

KAREN ROSENBERG

MOSCOW WOMEN: Thirteen Interviews. *By Carola Hansson and Karin Liden. Translated by Gerry Bothmer, George Blecher and Lone Blecher. Pantheon. 194 pp. $16.95. Paper $7.95.*

Remember Alexandra Kollontai, the Bolshevik leader who asked revolutionary questions about the role of women in the new Soviet state? She's dead. But if she weren't, she'd be avant-garde in the Soviet Union today. It's not her theories that one misses as much as her dynamic attitude, her restless search for egalitarian relations between the sexes, her willingness to challenge clichés about the immutable natures of men and women. Who is going to shatter the Soviet Union's complacency about the role of women under socialism?

Not the thirteen subjects of *Moscow Women*, that's for sure. In this collection of interviews conducted by two Swedish journalists in 1978, using personal rather than official contacts, names have been changed to protect the innocent, for only a few of the women are vaguely dissident, and none are representatives of that small, embattled Soviet feminist movement you may have heard of.

The voices in *Moscow Women* register complaints in private, if at all. The women acknowledge that day-care centers are badly supervised, overcrowded and sometimes unavailable. They criticize the medical system for needlessly painful—and dangerous—births and abortions. But they hardly talk of such matters to other Russian women, let alone to the men who hold most of the leading positions in government. A sense of political powerlessness pervades their narratives—and what's tragic is that they take their impotence for granted. The lack of focused and articulated outrage is a depressing sign that what we in the West call feminism is absent in the Soviet Union.

"We thought we would find a dividing line between official and private ideologies," wrote the interviewers, Carola Hansson and Karin Liden, in their conclusion. Instead, they discovered that many Soviet women have internalized official values and feel frustrated, guilty and inadequate that, as harried working mothers, they cannot live up to an ideal of the Red Superwoman. Combine that with the old imperative to be beautiful and serene. Kollontai may be gone, but Goethe's Eternal Feminine (in its nineteenth-century Russian translation) is a living presence in the Soviet Union. "Masha," a 23-year-old draftswoman at a truck factory, expresses a sentiment that is repeated frequently in this book: "To me femininity encompasses a lot of things—delicacy, a little mystery, an ability to bring out the attractive qualities within oneself and to hide the bad ones. A woman mustn't lose her temper. And of course she has to take care of her appearance." And of course she has to take care of the children—no man could do that as well. (In fact, that's probably true of many of the husbands in this book.)

That's not the only old-fashioned aspect of modern Soviet women. In this collection, educated women speak of aspirin and "a little urine" as a means of contraception, and confuse the side effects of birth control pills and thalidomide. Influenced by the government's pronatalist policies and by their own traditional upbringing, they uniformly consider voluntary childlessness beyond the pale. The most progressive remark one reads here is that men should help women with household chores and child rearing. But most of the women ruefully admit that their husbands do very little around the house. In such an enclosed and controlled society, it seems to be nearly impossible even for unhappy women to imagine radically different patterns of living. Are the sexual stereotypes regrettable leftovers from the past which will soon be overcome? It looks as if tomorrow will be disturbingly familiar. "Now schools are urged to

Karen Rosenberg is a fellow of the Russian Research Center of Harvard University. Her articles have appeared in The Progressive *and* Boston Review.

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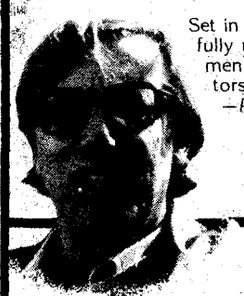

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emphasize the role of the family and to give girls an education that will prepare them for their future role as mothers and housewives," reports "Nadezhda Pavlovna," a Communist Party member who trains teachers.

Since almost all Soviet women work outside the home as well as within it, they have much less leisure time than men—to pursue their professional education, to think, to exercise, to enjoy the seasons. *Moscow Women* is an important book because it is one of the first to personalize statistics and sociological studies about the "double burden" of paid employment and household duties which Soviet women bear. The conversations recorded here are a real-life counterpart to the classic novella on the subject, Natalya Baranskaya's *A Week Like Any Other*, written in 1969 and the subject of some controversy in the Soviet press. Baranskaya's heroine, Olga, is in danger of losing her job because she is perennially late and often absent. (She misses about a third of the work year to take care of her children, who are always catching illnesses from other kids in their day-care center—a problem the women interviewed by Hansson and Liden also address.) Olga's colleague, a single mother, relies on her own mother to do the housework and watch the children. But *Moscow Women* suggests that those legendary grandmothers *cum* babysitters are hard to come by. These days they often have careers of their own. The two single mothers interviewed in *Moscow Women* leave their sons in twenty-four-hour nurseries during the workweek; mother and child are united only on weekends. "I could pick him up on Wednesdays, but it doesn't seem to work out," relates "Liza." "If I fetch him after work we don't get home till eight. He goes to bed at nine, and then I have to get up at six to get him back to the day-care center."

These interviews suggest that Baranskaya gave, if anything, a sanguine picture of the lives of Soviet women. About a decade after her tale was written, none of the nonfictional Muscovites in *Moscow Women* could boast the heroine's four-room apartment with private bath. It's not uncommon for a young couple with a child to have a single room in a communal apartment or a student dormitory, or in the living quarters of the older generation. This book helps one view the Soviet Union's priorities from a woman's perspective: imagine trying to unlearn traditional

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roles while living as an adult with parents or in-laws. The lack of labor-saving appliances and convenience foods means more time in the kitchen for guess who. The liberation of women would entail major economic and attitudinal changes, and until they come, women will continue to be exploited.

Hansson and Liden have outlined the situation of Soviet women—but they could have told more. Their failure to ask follow-up questions about intriguing topics is symptomatic of a certain rigidity in their method; they often ask the same general questions of each woman (such as "Are there any typical women's jobs?"), to the detriment of their subjects' personal stories. As a consequence, their book lacks depth as well as breadth. Most of the thirteen women are well educated and quite young (seven are between the ages of 21 and 25; three are between 28 and 32; only three are beyond their mid-30s). Gail Warshofsky Lapidus's excellent introduction fills in some of the gaps, as do Hansson and Liden's short chapters on salaries, day care, pensions and divorces. But the overly schematized structure of the interviews inevitably limits the conclusions that can be drawn from them.

I began this book interested in Soviet women, and I ended it curious about Swedish feminism. Hansson and Liden are shadowy figures in *Moscow Women*—they rarely speak in the subjective tone that American feminist journalists often employ. But occasionally their comments reveal a smugness which, not surprisingly, elicits a defensive reaction from the Russians. "In many countries in the West, women also have the same rights, technically, as men, but we demand that the law be implemented, and quickly!" says one interviewer. I'm not sure Swedish women can rest so securely on their laurels. "In our country the man can also stay home," says the interviewer. But does he? Hilda Scott, author of *Sweden's Right to Be Human* (as well as *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences From Eastern Europe*, cited by Hansson and Liden), reports that in 1979 only 12 percent of Swedish fathers stayed home with a new baby for six weeks to two months; most of them were professionals or civil servants rather than blue-collar workers and others employed by private concerns. True, the Swedish government has thrown its weight behind sexual egalitarianism in ways that the Soviet government has not; nonetheless, the gap between promise and fulfillment, between ideology and action, isn't just a Soviet phenomenon. Self-satisfied Soviet claims created the need for a critical, investigative book like *Moscow Women*. Isn't it time to admit that no country has won the feminist revolution—or do we need *Stockholm Women* to remind us? □

'...And the Rest Are Girls'

ANN SNITOW

INVISIBLE WOMEN: The Schooling Scandal. *By Dale Spender. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society. Distributed by W. W. Norton. 179 pp. $12.95. Paper $6.95.*

This quiet brown mouse of a book, based on studies of English comprehensive schools, persuasively argues a rather disturbing point, one which has been made many times before but which never seems to stick: coeducation is bad for girls. Actually, this understates Dale Spender's case. Coeducation, she charges, is grossly unjust, intellectually nullifying and sexually abusive to girls; it is the death of their hopes, the grave of their self-esteem.

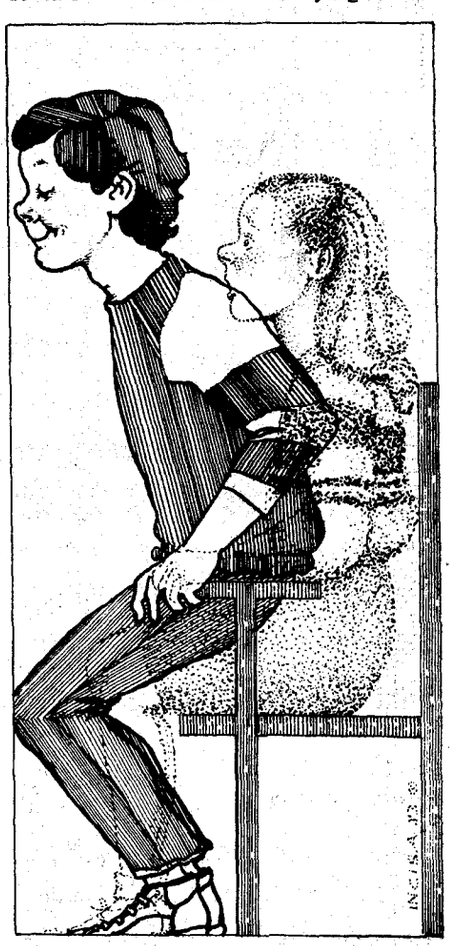
Boys, on the other hand, do better in mixed schools than in sex-segregated ones, since "the presence of girls is necessary in order to promote the positive image of boys." In all-boy schools, as one teacher observes, "the boys create an inferior or outside group and level the abuse at them that they would otherwise direct at the girls. The least 'manly' boys become the target and are used as substitute girls."

The best part of *Invisible Women* is its central section, "In the Classroom," the only direct glimpse the book affords into the gender dynamics of school life as Spender, a former teacher, and other researchers have observed them, day by day. Though elsewhere her argument is solid and logical, it is only here that Spender succeeds in calling up what we feel and remember about how it really was (and, it would seem, still is) to be a girl in a coeducational school.

In the classrooms Spender studied, the double standard flourishes, exhausting the logic and jading the sense of justice in the girls perpetually exposed to its mean-spirited contradictions. Disliked equally for being "colourless, passive and docile" or for being active and aggressive, girls are always somehow "wrong" at school; they are softened up, worn down, prepared psychologically for second place.

Boys typically receive two thirds of teacher attention and when they get less they protest with rowdy behavior that usually gets results. Girls feel this ratio in their blood. Even feminist teachers find it hard to rectify the imbalance. Spender reports that though she bent over backward to give equal attention to girls, her tape recordings showed she never managed to give them more than 42 percent of her time. Both she and the boys experienced her efforts as favoritism to girls. This is how hard it is to imagine equal time for women.

In the case of teachers—male or female—who are not even trying to cor-



Ann Snitow teaches English and women's studies at Rutgers and is currently writing a book about women novelists.

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rect gender asymmetry, the situation is much worse. They tell interviewers baldly that girls "haven't got the imagination that most of the lads have got." One listed all the boys in his class by name, offering details about their personalities, then finished his description of the class with "and the rest are girls." So often neglected or put down, girls yearn for approval. They want boys to like them; they want the admiration of the sex they've been taught has the power to praise. But to win positive attention they must also learn to agree with men and boys, must learn, in effect, to patronize themselves.

None of Spender's findings are particularly controversial. Researchers of all camps have known for a long time that girls suffer educational setbacks when they study alongside boys. How has such a universal research finding slipped so quietly into acceptance? Why haven't the passivity, the silence, the depression of schoolgirls aroused worry and spurred expensive remedies? Once one has posed that question, as Spender does, it is already answered: Schools are not *for* girls. Since the end of the nineteenth century, girls have been gradually integrated but with the understanding that they are to be well-mannered guests, sit at the back of the room (Spender gives actual examples of this seating arrangement), and agree that they are lucky to be able to study what men have thought and boys crave to know.

Spender argues that schools perpetuate the gender system not as an oversight but as a central purpose. We can't simply add some positive images of women to the textbooks and give girls seats in metalworking class to even things up. It is Spender's contention that "if sexism were to be removed from the curriculum there would be virtually nothing left to teach." Men have made the knowledge purveyed in schools, and for them male dominance is hardly a subject for debate. It is women who must intellectually question it, socially resist it. But Spender provides depressing figures about how few women are planners in the English school system (and, of course, the number has gone down since the massive gender integration of schools there in the last few decades).

In our time, all-girl schools have been dismissed as unreal environments, but this, says Spender, is precisely their strength: "In single-sex schools, girls are protected from the daily messages supplied by boys that the girls are unworthy." This gives them a small space, a brief moment, a stolen opportunity for the exotic experience of autonomy. Spender has some faith that "it takes less amounts of time, energy and organization to open up horizons than it does to close them," and though she finds "patriarchy" all-pervasive, she also thinks it fragile since it depends on women's willing consent. Nonetheless, she knows that it's unlikely for the school system to revert to single-sex education. What, then, is to be done?

This is the hard part, and though Spender is usefully eclectic, she is never liberal. She honors all efforts at reform but has few hopes for any changes that are not primary and structural, that do not give women independent power to define the curriculum and separate space to develop what will necessarily be rebellious ideas.

Her practical suggestions include enclaves within schools (girls do poorly in mixed math classes, for instance, but well on their own); independent feminist institutions of research and learning; and even direct feminist action in mixed classrooms. It doesn't take much, she has found, for girls to recognize unfairness once a sympathetic teacher encourages them to ask such dangerous questions as "Who talks most in this class?"

When she sticks to her last, then, Spender is sound; but hers is a small book on a large subject. She mildly echoes the great works on her theme—Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, Woolf's *Three Guineas*. What can she offer us that they do not? Some recent research findings, some lively remarks from modern schoolgirls and schoolboys. But these strong points keep dissolving in the medium of her monochromatic style. She is dutiful and politically correct, but her imagination is limited. One suspects that her schoolgirls engage in more covert resistance than she notices. Certainly, their voices show a vitality that contradicts her unrelieved gloom about downtrodden girls. The converted need not read Spender and the unconvinced are unlikely to stick with her, for she repeats herself and is often righteous in a single key when it would be more exciting if she were speculative or analytical.

Of course, repetition is part of Spender's point: the first third of *Invisible Women* surveys all those before her who have said just what she is saying, from Aphra Behn onward. Yes, none of

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them have been properly, fully heard. And one understands why Spender takes the tone she does. It is amazing that the obvious has not *been* obvious, that gross oppression remains invisible oppression. Coeducational schools pretend to a gender neutrality so far from girls' actual experience that the discrepancy is breathtaking. It is frustration that leads Spender to weary reiteration, to succumb to the temptation of proof by sarcastic assertion—stylistic gestures natural enough under the circumstances but ineffective and inert as political writing strategies.

In the early 1970s, writers of the women's movement often got away with just such unmodulated harping on one note because their work was fresh polemic—demonic, furious. Spender has yet to find the right voice for the new demands of a complex feminist present.

One final word: this book is about England and ends with a list of resources for feminist scholars there. In the United States there has been an explosion of scholarly work by and about women. Only last year, 103 new women's studies programs began in universities, bringing the total to over 400 nationally, while, outside of institutions, feminists are connected by extensive scholarly and political networks. We are already living in the presence of the new knowledge Spender calls for, and though, as she shows us, this knowledge is rejected, resisted, often still invisible to the culture at large, a growing community of women is living in its light.

I suspect, though, that girls in most American public schools glimpse little of this brightening of the atmosphere. Reading Spender turns attention to grade schools and high schools where, if there is to be a feminist future, girls need chances to experience a feminist present. □

Lady Macbeth and After

BRINA CAPLAN

VIRGINS AND VIRAGOS: A History of Women in Scotland From 1080–1980. *By Rosalind K. Marshall. Academy Chicago. 340 pp. $15.95. Paper $7.95.*

In her *Common Reader* essays, Virginia Woolf staged imaginary meetings with Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë and sent H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett off on a train ride to discuss the nature of fiction. In *Virgins and Viragos*, Rosalind Marshall gathers together generations of Scottish women for a dialogue on a grander scale. Marshall's aim is social history rather than imaginative speculation, and her concern isn't novel-writing but the nature of the lives these women led. Nonetheless, like Woolf's essays, her book creates the effect of discussion among individuals who never met—or if they did, were restrained by class or prejudice from exchanging views. It is lively with implied conversation.

Virgins and Viragos considers "what it has meant to be a woman in Scotland in past centuries." It puts this question to, among others, medieval brides and street vendors, Restoration women of fashion, eighteenth-century women of learning, nineteenth-century bluestockings and educators, and the founders of the twentieth-century feminist movement in northern Britain.

Marshall has set herself no easy task, for many of the voices she wants to listen to have been permanently silenced. We have no personal papers of women who lived before 1650. For centuries most Scottish women could neither read nor write, and those few men who could did not write about them. "Not until the time of Gruoch, wife of Macbeth, in the mid-eleventh century," Marshall tells us, "do we know the name even of a Scottish queen." How much less accessible, then, are the thoughts of a woman of ordinary circumstances. Yet Marshall has found ways to recover lost voices. They can be overheard in an occasional document, complaining about a bad marriage or an unfair trade regulation, applying to carry on a deceased husband's craft or appealing for the pardon of a relative who has offended the Crown. Sometimes the women speak directly; often, they are spoken for by statistics that summarize women's confrontations with the court, the church or the town.

Between 1200 and 1900, a remarkable number of women managed to squeeze through the cracks of a tightly schematized and restrictive social order. In

Brina Caplan is a freelance writer who writes for The Georgia Review *and* The New York Times.

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1588, for example, an Edinburgh skinner's wife operated a bustling catering business. Her independence caused the city's merchant guild, "which placed great emphasis on the social standing of its members," to refuse admission to the skinner unless his wife agreed " 'not to carry meat dishes or courses through the town' . . . nor were she and her servants . . . to appear on the street wearing their aprons." More perilously unconventional, the seventeenth-century Quaker preacher Margaret Miller, when driven from the Edinburgh meetinghouse, took to preaching "in the open air, guarded by her husband on one side and her son on the other." And then there's Marjorie, Countess of Carrick, medieval ancestor of Robert Bruce. Espying a "strikingly handsome young man" hunting on her land, she had him kidnapped and held captive while he considered her offer to make him her second husband.

Although *Virgins and Viragos* records the deeds of these exceptional women, it focuses on the thoughts and reactions of women living within established social norms. The defining experience for such women was marriage—which up to the twentieth century, Marshall reminds us, meant serial pregnancy, "with all its attendant inconveniences and ills." Despite the rigors of their estate, Marshall asserts, ordinary Scottish women were not soulless, benumbed chattle. On the contrary, they "experienced the full range of human emotions." The testimony she compiles century by century makes her argument indisputable.

But there is a problem with Marshall's method, which severely limits the historical field of view. Within the 900 years she surveys, dynasties rose and fell, the population converted from Catholicism to Presbyterianism, a series of religious wars saw the Scots sometimes in the role of rebels and sometimes in the role of royalists, and industrialization altered forever a once rural society. Surely, such convulsive changes affected women's lives profoundly, yet all these events occur beyond the horizon of this book. From Marshall's vantage point, the discoveries of asepsis and anesthesia, which eased the dangers and pain of childbirth, loom larger than social and political upheavals. Nonetheless, she is able to return to us voices silenced by time and circumstance. How many of us, after all, ever considered that Lady Macbeth might have had a first name? □

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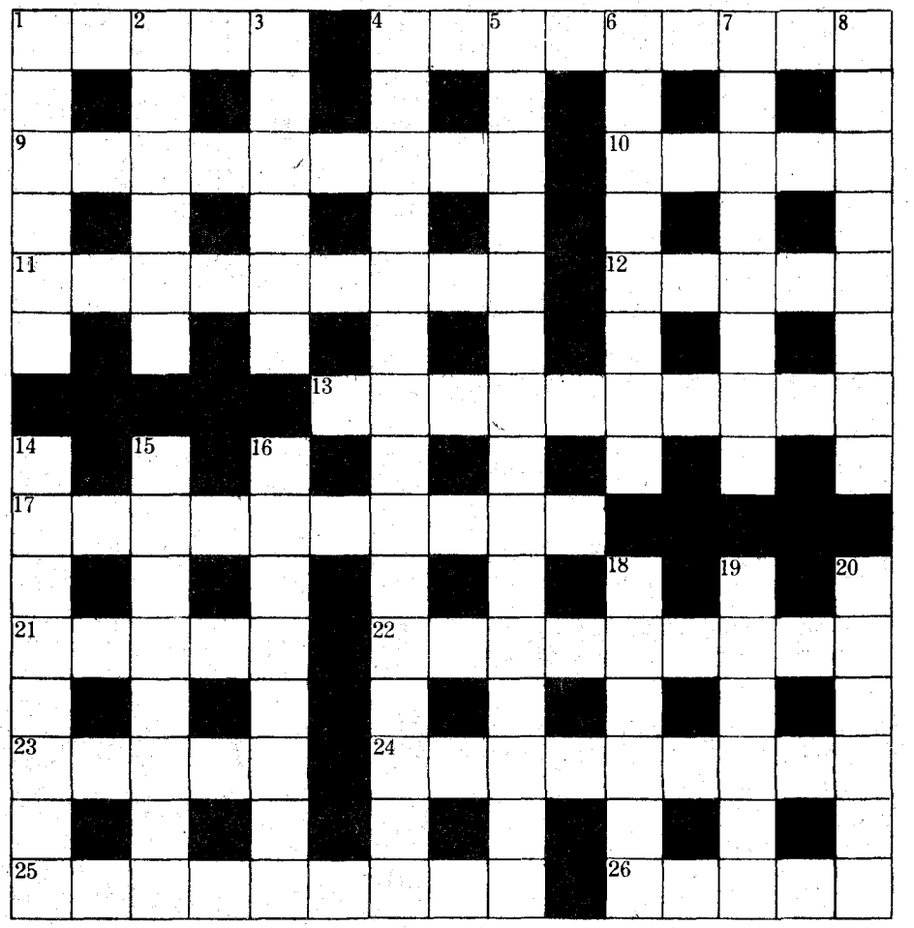
X-523

Crossword Puzzle No. 1964

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Duck! It might be the Admiral! (5)
6 A little senior in a credo, possibly, but not much of a stand-out in the matter of decor. (3-6)
9 Old-fashioned handlebars, as you might say. (9)
10 Sounds like a former charge, praise be! (5)
11 Habiliment provided by a cottager. (9)
12 French runner, alias *Le Roi.* (5)
13 Though different from Tulsa, Rome's head over heels to make one. (10)
17 Poor, but breaks bread after a change of heart. (10)
21 Possibly the edict is formally mentioned this way. (5)
22 Strangely enough, this water clock is found only in dry places. (9)
23 Proverbially done on Monday, taking on water. (5)
24 They show the value of resistance by assigning them Morse letters. (9)
25 Is the loser in the debate lacking in reserve? (9)
26 Altered state of critical judgment. (5)

DOWN

1 With Hoover (officially) it's 47 years or so, but let's hope it doesn't show. (6)
2 As true as the south wind, possibly. (6)
3 They show how old the calendar moon is by the make-up of the sap, etc. (6)
4 One way or another it shows how something is taken by a pirate or just any common criminal. (2,4,2,2,5)
5 According to Nelson Eddy in the old musical, a little will get you a lot. (And they weren't even worried about cholesterol!) (5-7,3)
6 Look at the mirror—through this? (8)
7 When I run, I get confused—it may be a plot! (8)
8 Not a real sort of tot, though in this, one might speak highly of almost anything! (8)
14 Catsup on a famous Roman? You'll get abruptly disconnected! (8)
15 Prolong anything but an amateur treatise! (8)
16 By suggestion, something like an iron vessel might have to be withstood. (8)
18 It might be perfect in Latin or imperfect in Russian, but that may be only one view. (6)
19 Don't they work because they may be wheels? (6)
20 A follower of Zoroaster has to be taken at value, understand? (6)

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